

NORTH KOREA POPS OFF ■ RUSSIA'S BABY BUST ■ NYT TANTRUM

JULY 31, 2006

# The American Conservative

## What's Wrong with the Democrats?

Steve Sailer

James P. Pinkerton

Bill Kauffman



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## FAITH IN REASON

Congratulations on Scott McConnell's beautifully written, non-polemical essay "Divided & Conquered" (July 3). Many Americans are distressed at the injustices to which we as a country contribute daily, injustices we feel helpless to rectify. Both liberal (*New York Times*) and conservative (*Washington Times*) outlets have succumbed to journalistic bias to a terrible degree, hence many of our citizens are not given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether the actions we support against the Palestinians are fair.

It makes one tempted to believe John Calvin's doctrine of the depravity of human nature. But as a Catholic, I stubbornly maintain faith in human reason's natural capacity to apprehend one's own errors and duly rectify them. Keep wielding the power of the pen.

E. CHRISTIAN BRUGGER, PH.D.  
*Alexandria, Va.*

## ANSWER THE QUESTION

Scott McConnell writes, "The Israelis, one read repeatedly after the Camp David talks had broken down, were prepared to give Arafat 97 percent of the West Bank, or perhaps merely 94 percent. It seemed nearly the whole loaf, plus territorial compensation for the remainder, taken from 'Israel proper.' While the actual acreage offered to the Palestinians varied from account to account, it led to the same conclusion: why did the Palestinians need to haggle over a few hectares of land, a nominal percentage of the West Bank, when the prospect of a real independent state was within their grasp?"

It is ironic that Mr. McConnell never answers this question. It is the keystone to the entire predicament into which the Palestinians have gotten themselves. Half an article of diatribe against the Israelis but no answer to this question.

The only answer that Mr. McConnell seems to give is that the separation fence that the Israelis are building is not

being built on the "green line" (1967 borders). But surely he is aware that this fence's construction commenced years after Camp David and Arafat's latest "missed opportunity to miss an opportunity" for peace during the second intifada. So that can't be the answer to the question of why Arafat chose to haggle over a few hectares when an independent state was in reach.

The real answer is that the Palestinian leadership has no interest in peace nor in a two-state solution. For then they would have to actually deal with their people's problems and they would have to build a state. It is much easier to fight and destroy than it is to build. So before berating the Israelis, see if you can find an alternative answer to your most vexing question.

YEHUDA FRIEDMAN  
*Clifton, N.J.*

## Scott McConnell replies:

Yehuda Friedman brings up the so-called incredibly generous offer of Camp David in 2000 and wonders why the Palestinians didn't leap for it. One reason is that it divided the Palestinian territory into cantons, giving Israel control of whether Palestinians could trade or move freely within the confines of their own "state." The Israeli offer also gave Israel control of precious West Bank aquifers and proposed compensating the Palestinians with some desert, including a toxic-waste dump. Not all acreage is equal, something that becomes much more evident when visiting the region—a point I tried to emphasize in my piece, though evidently not sufficiently for Mr. Friedman.

At Taba, six months later, Barak and Palestinian negotiators actually came far closer to agreement, at which point Israel withdrew from the talks.

Arafat's successor, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has been forthright in proclaiming his acceptance of the two-state solution, but Israel has never given him the time of day. Of

course, no one was more delighted than Israeli hawks at Hamas' election, which gave them an excuse not to negotiate with the Palestinians at all.

## NO LIBERTARIANS ALLOWED

I have been subscribing to *The American Conservative* since its first issue. One minor gripe I have had in the past is the number of articles that have appeared in *TAC* that have been written by libertarians. Libertarians have their own journals and periodicals. *TAC* should not be wasting valuable space given the dearth of genuine conservative magazines.

There is no such animal as a "libertarian-conservative." This goes all the way back to the founding of our Republic. The conservatives (Hamilton, Washington, the Adams brothers, Franklin, Madison, Monroe, Jay) laid out their position in the *Federalist Papers*. The libertarians (Randolph, Mason, Jefferson, Henry, Paine, the early Hancock) laid out their position in the *Anti-Federalist Papers*. The differences between conservatives and libertarians on a host of issues was, and is, so great that our history includes two little known examples of the conflict between the two different economic, moral, political, and philosophical approaches to government—the libertarian revolts of (Shays' Rebellion) of 1786-87 and (the Whiskey Rebellion) of 1791-94 that had to be put down by military force.

I don't think that one can be a Federalist and an Anti-Federalist at the same time.

MICHAEL EMMETT BRADY  
*Via e-mail*

*The American Conservative* welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com), by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.

# Contents

July 31, 2006 / Vol. 5, No. 15

ZUMA PRESS



[ POLITICS ]

## What's Wrong With the Democrats?

BY STEVE SAILER They've left middle America behind and can't pander to one minority without alienating another. **Page 7**

[ IDEAS ]

## New Deals & Old Answers

BY JAMES P. PINKERTON Can the Democrats recover the ideological energy of William Jennings Bryan or FDR? Not on their current course. **Page 10**

[ LIBERTY ]

## Our Dangerous Times

BY JAMES BOVARD In accusing the *NYT* of treason, the Right displays greater loyalty to the president than to their old principles. **Page 20**

[ TRADE ]

## Attention Wal-Mart Shoppers

BY SEN. BYRON L. DORGAN Low prices come at a high economic cost. **Page 25**

### COLUMNS

**6 Patrick J. Buchanan:** Kim Jong Il's Independence Day

**35 Taki:** World Cup, National Sport

### NEWS & VIEWS

**4 Fourteen Days:** Court Reins in Bush Gitmo Tribunals; A Pat on the Head for Social Conservatives; The Devil Defeats Immigration Reform

**17 Deep Background:** Terrorists Scoop Times on Financial Surveillance; TSA Is Making a List—and Not Checking It Twice

### ARTICLES

**15 Paul Craig Roberts:** Don't worry about what currency oil is denominated in—worry about the deficit.

**18 Stewart Nusbaumer:** Why we're losing hearts and minds in Afghanistan

**22 Pavel Kohout:** State subsidies won't reverse Russia's demographic decline.

### ARTS & LETTERS

**28 Steve Sailer:** Meryl Streep in "The Devil Wears Prada"

**29 Bill Kauffman:** *Where Did the Party Go? William Jennings Bryan, Hubert Humphrey, and the Jeffersonian Legacy* by Jeff Taylor

**31 R.J. Stove:** *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* by Robert Philip

**33 James Bowman:** *The Creators: From Chaucer and Dürer to Picasso and Disney* by Paul Johnson

COVER ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS HIERS



[JUSTICE]

## OVERDUE PROCESS

Until now, most any presidential prerogative that could be justified as combating terror bypassed legislative sanction or judicial oversight. Now the Supreme Court has ruled against the tribunals created by the Bush administration to try Guantanamo detainees.

To hear the self-appointed narrators of the Right tell it, the court committed high treason: Mark Levin denounced the justices who voted to restrict presidential authority as the “al-Qaeda Five.” Yet the decision affirms that here the law, not the executive, still rules.

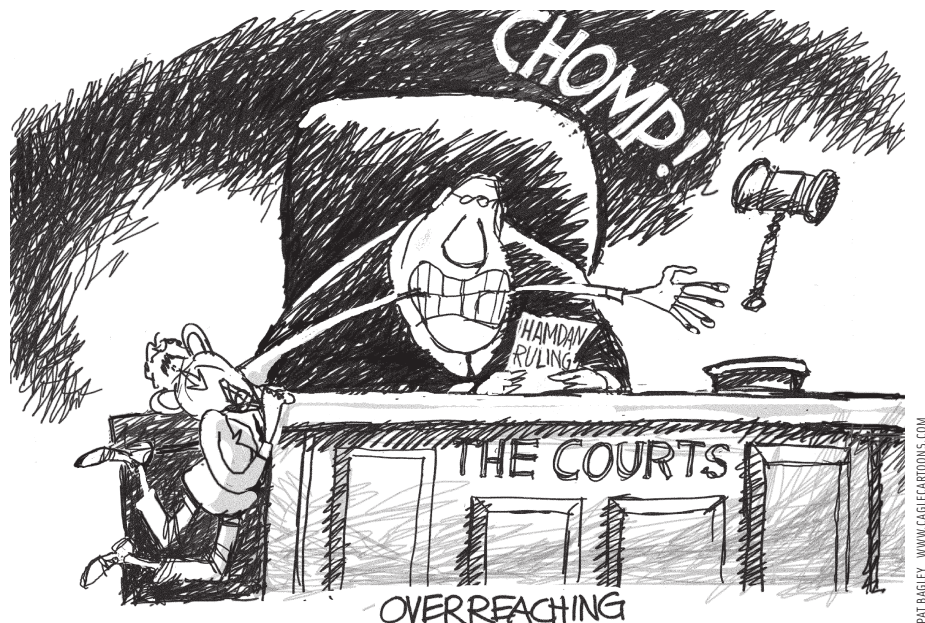
Under the Bush policy, detainees were deemed ineligible for POW status and its accompanying protections. They could be held indefinitely without charges or judicial process. When, following another ruling, military commissions were set up to contest status, usual courts-martial rules didn’t apply: they presumed the accuracy of intelligence secured by torture, evidence was routinely deemed classified and withheld, and the proceedings occurred without counsel. Of the 700 men held at Guantanamo over the past five years, just ten have been accused of war crimes; none have been tried.

The majority suggested that Congress could remedy the situation, and hearings have been scheduled. For his part, President Bush said, “We got people looking at it right now to determine how we can work with Congress.” It would have been nice if rather than setting policy with the stroke of his pen, he had adopted that co-operative attitude without a Supreme Court spanking.

[POLITICS]

## BARGAIN VALUES

Less than five months before the November elections, congressional Republicans are comforting their demoralized base in their usual way—by



cobbling together a bunch of last-minute legislative initiatives under the mom-and-apple-pie “American Values Agenda” banner. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) even issued a press release endorsing bills by socially conservative congressmen who are normally sidelined.

Considering that Republicans control the executive and legislative branches, this is pretty thin gruel. For pro-lifers, women undergoing abortions would be told that fetuses feel pain. There would be another vote on the federal marriage amendment, a purely symbolic gesture since this attempt to block same-sex matrimony already failed in the Senate. And the GOP courageously sides with the 90 percent of Americans who want to keep “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Some of the initiatives are worthwhile. But for the values voters who contributed so heavily to GOP electoral successes in 2004, the American Values Agenda is a pretty small payoff.

[MIDEAST]

## RULES OF DISENGAGEMENT

George W. Bush decided early in his presidency he wasn’t much interested in an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. And apart from a few words about a two-state solution to mollify Tony Blair, he has kept to this course while giving Israel’s leaders a blank check. The consequences are becoming plain. The steps leading to the latest flare-up are well known: Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; the ineffectual firing of makeshift

Palestinian rockets from the evacuated territory; Israeli retaliation that killed scores of Palestinian civilians; a Palestinian operation killing two and capturing one Israeli soldier; Israeli collective punishment against Gaza’s population; Palestinian murder of a young Israeli settler; Israel’s arrest of half the elected Palestinian government; strike; counter-strike.

Largely overlooked amidst the escalating violence is the fact that Hamas, the elected Palestinian government, recently agreed with President Abbas to negotiate with Israel on the basis of the “prisoners’ document,” a formula that unites Palestinians around seeking an independent state and recognizing Israel within its internationally accepted borders.

The choice would therefore seem clear: a negotiation process leading to a two-state solution—which can only be brought about by American diplomacy—or a political and humanitarian disaster in Gaza and the West Bank, in which millions of Palestinians have no electricity, no services, no government. Why the administration feels this latter outcome will buttress America’s standing in the Muslim world and advance goals of isolating Islamic extremists and defeating terrorists is difficult to fathom.

[DIPLOMACY]

## BUSH’S LOOT

They say to beware of Greeks bearing gifts—add Jordanians and Saudis. The State Department’s Office of Protocol

has released its register of gifts given to federal officials in 2004. For the president who has everything but an exit strategy, *The Worst-Case Scenario Handbook* from the Sultan of Brunei, a sniper rifle from Jordan's King Abdullah, and a statue of Hercules from Italy's Silvio Berlusconi. The Jordanians also showed their generosity—if not their subtlety—by bestowing an aromatherapy kit on hard-driving Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Vice President Cheney, not generally known for his sunny disposition, received a “Happy Day” clock from the Swiss, not generally known for their sense of irony, as well as—thank those mellow Jordanians again—scented candles. Cheney's more pragmatic Chinese counterpart presented him with *The Art of War*. Less obviously useful were the 64-diamond Bulgari necklace the Saudis gave Secretary of State Colin Powell and—we hope—the leather whip the Hungarians presented to President Bush.

[FAITH]

## RELIGIOUS WRONGS

Christopher Hitchens has never been a friend to Christians, but that has not stopped *World*—the evangelical magazine edited by former Bush adviser Marvin Olasky—from finding room for an admiring interview with the dipsomaniacal ex-Trotskyite, who took the opportunity to tell his hosts just what he thinks about such figures as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. “These are peasants,” he said, “the sort of people we are up against now, with wild looks in their eyes and living in caves.” As for Christ dying for man's sins, to Hitchens that's just “scapegoating that absolves one of all responsibility in return for the acceptance of the incredible and the undesirable. And ... if you don't believe it, then we have a real program of torture that will go on forever. It's disgusting.” *World's* interviewer could only say

that this was a “rare moment of less-than-astute analysis” for Hitchens.

The Cato Institute's Gene Healy sums up the attitude that seems to have taken hold of the magazine's editors: “Insult our Savior, defame our religion, support the president: you're pretty swell, all things considered. The war must be very, very important to Christian conservatives.”

[IMMIGRATION]

## CANNON SMOKE

Congressman Chris Cannon's win over John Jacob in the Utah Republican primary is definitely a setback for immigration reformers. Cannon is the immigration-policy point man for President Bush in the House, and his defeat might have killed the Senate's “comprehensive” bill. Instead, amnesty proponents get to breathe a sigh of relief.

Yet the open-borders brigade wants to go one step further, spinning this as proof that amnesty is a political winner. The *Wall Street Journal* gloated “even his opponent conceded that Mr. Cannon had won the debate over immigration in his district.” Cannon himself was quick to claim vindication: “I hope what it means is Republicans look at this and realize we don't have to be divided on the issue of illegal immigration.”

This is a misreading. Jacob was an inexperienced, flawed candidate. Just as polls showed him running even with Cannon, he told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that “the devil” was hurting his fundraising. Cannon pulled away, and the challenger never recovered. And immigration was clearly Cannon's biggest liability. It was the five-term incumbent's amnesty advocacy that led to his defeat at the GOP convention in the first place, forcing him into an expensive primary where over 40 percent of the vote went against him. Support for immigration enforcement can't guarantee candidates who see demons victory, but Cannon's experience hardly demonstrates amnesty's popularity. ■

## The American Conservative

Founding Editor  
**Taki Theodoracopoulos**

Editor and Publisher  
**Scott McConnell**

Executive Editor  
**Kara Hopkins**

Literary Editor  
**Daniel McCarthy**

Senior Writer  
**W. James Antle III**

Film Critic  
**Steve Sailer**

Contributing Editors

Andrew J. Bacevich, Doug Bandow, James Bovard,  
Richard Cummings, Michael Desch, Philip Giraldi,  
Paul Gottfried, Leon Hadar, Peter Hitchens,  
Christopher Layne, Eric S. Margolis, James P. Pinkerton,  
Justin Raimondo, Fred Reed, R.J. Stove,  
Thomas E. Woods Jr., John Zmirak

Art Director  
**Mark Graef**

Associate Publisher  
**Jon Basil Utley**

Publishing Consultant  
**Ronald E. Burr**

Office Manager  
**Veronica Yanos**

Copy Assistant  
**John W. Greene**

Editor Emeritus  
**Patrick J. Buchanan**

*The American Conservative*, Vol. 5, No. 15, July 31, 2006 (ISSN 1540-966X). Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. TAC is published 24 times per year, biweekly (except for January and August) for \$49.97 per year by The American Conservative, LLC, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA, 22209. Periodicals postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the United States of America. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030.

Subscription rates: \$49.97 per year (24 issues) in the U.S., \$54.97 in Canada (U.S. funds), and \$69.97 other foreign (U.S. funds). Back issues: \$6.00 (prepaid) per copy in USA, \$7.00 in Canada (U.S. funds).

**For subscription orders, payments, and other subscription inquiries —**

By phone: **800-579-6148**  
(outside the U.S./Canada 856-380-4131)

Via Web: [www.amconmag.com](http://www.amconmag.com)

By mail: *The American Conservative*, P.O. Box 9030, Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

When ordering a subscription please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of your first issue.

Inquiries and letters to the editor should be sent to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com). For advertising sales or editorial call 703-875-7600.

This issue went to press on July 6, 2006.  
Copyright 2006 *The American Conservative*.

# Kim Jong Il's Independence Day

The long-awaited test of Kim Jong Il's Taepodong-2 ICBM, which could put a small warhead on the United States, was held July 4.

Flaming out after 42 seconds, Kim's big rocket splashed into the Sea of Japan, along with half a dozen Scuds and Nodongs Mr. Kim's rocket team fired off around the same time in the Independence Day fireworks display in North Korea. One of the shorter-range rockets almost landed on Mother Russia.

As Asians are said to place great importance on the concept of "face," it was not a good day for Mr. Kim or the would-be Wernher von Brauns of his Hermit Kingdom. One can almost hear the laughter from the boys at the NORAD missile-tracking site in Cheyenne Mountain.

While we cannot read the mind of the reclusive North Korean dictator, apparently this missile test, preparations for which had been picked up two weeks before launch, was to get America and the world's attention. Kim has to be deeply envious of Iranian President Ahmadinejad, whose defiance of the EU-3, Russia, China, the United States, and UN, refusing to yield on Tehran's right to enrich uranium for nuclear power, has dominated world headlines for six months.

By rolling an ICBM to the launch pad and fueling it, Kim seemed to be saying: "Hey, what about me! My nuclear program is years ahead of Iran's, and I've got the rockets to go with it. Watch this!"

But Kim's July 4th dud has left egg all over his face.

China and South Korea, the two nations upon whom he depends for aid, trade, and political support, had asked him not to break his own missile moratorium. He humiliated both. Japan had

warned him against the test and is now cutting aid, moving closer militarily to the United States, and talking up missile defense. That cannot please Beijing, whose food and fuel are essential to Pyongyang's survival.

If Kim continues with his provocative missile tests and secret nuclear program, he could convince Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea to develop their own nuclear deterrents, which would mightily complicate Beijing's plans for the future of Asia, as U.S. power inevitably recedes.

Yet by ignoring the advice of ex-Secretary of Defense William Perry to launch air or cruise missile strikes to destroy the Taepodong on the launch pad, the White House acted wisely. Kim would have had to respond, perhaps with artillery on the DMZ, which could have ignited a new Korean war.

However, this moment of maximum isolation and embarrassment for Kim and the North may provide an opening for us to break out of the sterile six-nation talks on Kim's nuclear program. For as with Libya, there are the makings of a deal with this dictator.

What does Kim want? Direct talks with the Americans, an end to his isolation, diplomatic ties, security guarantees, food, aid, trade. What do we want? An end to the export of missile and nuclear technology to hostile nations and return of IAEA inspectors to all of Mr. Kim's nuclear facilities.

Why not offer Kim the same back-channel talks we pursued with Khaddafi, whose crimes against America, including Lockerbie, remain far more disgust-

ing and murderous than anything Kim Jong Il ever did to us?

What is there to lose? Kim might bray about a great propaganda and moral victory, but so what? The great Republic can surely endure the petty crowing of an Oriental tyrant.

What should be the ultimate goal of U.S. policy? Quite simply, to get U.S. soldiers and bases off the Korean peninsula and out of the line of fire of Pyongyang's weaponry, nuclear and non-nuclear.

There is no reason Americans should be first to die in a second Korean War. With the Cold War over, there is no vital U.S. interest on the peninsula. If 60 million Koreans, North and South, were suddenly raptured up to heaven, how would America be imperiled?

In 1950, we came to the defense of South Korea and lost 33,000 men in a three-year war defending that poor former colony of the Japanese Empire from a North Korean-Chinese Communist invasion. Out of that war came a strong, free South Korea with a population twice the size of the North's and a dynamic economy 30 times as large, a nation fully capable of defending itself without those 35,000 U.S. troops, most of them on the DMZ.

Yet there seems to be little gratitude among Korea's young. Last winter, a national poll found that, in the event of a U.S. war with the North, 50 percent of South Korea's young would side with the North, while 40 percent would wish to remain neutral. One-in-ten would support the United States. By two-to-one, young South Koreans believe China is their nation's most important partner. Get the message?

For years, they have wanted us out. Let us accommodate them. The way to Guam, and home, lies open. ■



# What's Wrong With the Democrats?

The identity-politics party doesn't know how to appeal to middle Americans.

By Steve Sailer

WHY HAVE THE DEMOCRATS proven so inept at electorally exploiting the growing evidence of the current Republican Party's incompetence at governing? The Democrats certainly have a chance of doing well in the November elections, but why is this merely a possibility?

In 1980, just half a dozen years after the GOP's Watergate humiliation, voters responded to the Carter administration's failures by electing a Republican president and Senate and scaring enough House Democrats that Ronald Reagan was able to pass much of his agenda. After five-and-a-half years of George W. Bush's presidency, it's reasonably clear that he wasn't qualified for the job and hasn't exactly grown in office. The GOP establishment, which anointed Bush in 1999 even though many had personal experience of his unsuitability for the highest office, deserves punishment for negligence. Yet no Democrat—with the longshot exception of Virginia senatorial candidate James Webb—has emerged to offer the galvanizing change in direction and tone that Reagan once brought to the Republicans.

The satirical *Onion* headline earlier this year said it all: "Democrats Vow Not To Give Up Hopelessness." If the voters turn to the Democrats this fall, it will only be as the lesser of two evils. America needs a less self-destructive Democratic Party, if just to keep Republican officeholders on their toes.

So, what's wrong with the Democrats? I'm going to speak more frankly than Democrats are used to hearing, but political correctness hurts them by shielding them from how the electorate

really thinks. Although many Democrats would prefer to keep on losing, a few might want to know what ails them.

For 40 years, progressives have toiled tirelessly to replace interest-group politics with identity-group politics. But taking pride in one's race is unseemly to the white majority, so partisan passions have become a sort of identity politics by other means for white people. Baby Boomers who once defined themselves by arguing over the Beatles vs. the Stones or George Lucas vs. Stanley Kubrick now express their self-conceptions by bickering over the Republicans vs. the Democrats.

The moment's issues are less important than they often seem. In 2000, George W. Bush ran on a "humble" foreign policy and in 2004 on an arrogant one, yet the distribution of his votes by state and by demographic group barely flickered from one election to the next.

Still, some past Democratic failures were so egregious that—even though the media hardly mention them anymore (because the press shared the Democrats' ill-chosen prejudices)—they continue to dog the electorate's perception of the Democrats. Although we are constantly assured today that America was unified throughout the Cold War in opposition to the Soviet Union, the public at least vaguely recalls that during the Reagan years much of the Democratic Party wanted to beg the Soviets for mercy, almost up to the day the evil empire collapsed.

The Democrats' other mark of Cain is the horrific 1964-1996 crime wave unleashed by the Great Society. After

almost a quarter of a million excess murders and the reduction of great American cities like Detroit to wastelands, it was finally quelled by the old conservative nostrums of cutting welfare and locking crooks up and throwing away the key.

These were not fluke mistakes. Instead, they explain the unpopularity of the Democrats. Their common denominator was the Democrats' tendency to sympathize more with foreign enemies and domestic delinquents than with their own country and their fellow citizens.

The Democrats' fundamental weakness is that even after four decades of their strenuously celebrating the moral supremacy of every organized minority, our political system remains, more or less, one of majority rule. It's hard to win a majority if you don't personally want to be part of the majority because your ego centers around visualizing yourself as better than the average American. If you don't like the American majority, either in principle or in person, the majority won't like you.

The GOP, in contrast, presents itself as the party of normal American voters, whose demographic transformation lags decades behind the raw population totals. Because the median voter is in his late forties, non-Hispanic whites cast 79 percent of the votes in 2004, according to the Census Bureau, even though they comprise only 68 percent of the total population and just 57 percent of those under age five.

One-third of Kerry voters were racial minorities compared to only one-tenth of Bush's. The president carried 58 percent of the white vote, and, perhaps most

importantly, 66 percent of married white men and 61 percent of married white women. (The celebrated gender gap, by the way, is no more than half as large as the less mentioned marriage gap. Bush won just 53 percent of single white males and 44 percent of single white females.)

Crucially, the Democrats garner the votes of merely one out of three of America's wedded white guys—the demographic segment that, to a fair if impolitic approximation, not only runs the country but also keeps the country running. Because Democrats have increasingly alienated the group that, more than any other, gets things done in America, it's become implausible for Democrats to portray themselves as the natural governing party. Thus they have become dependent upon Republican miscues, which, luckily for the Democrats (although not for the country), have been abundant.

This relegates the Democrats to trying to lash together unwieldy coalitions of minorities united mainly in their alienation from majority attitudes. This is possible, but it's harder than the GOP's task of mobilizing a fairly cohesive body of supporters. The Democrats resemble the ramshackle multi-tribe army of the Persian Empire and the Republicans the cohesive Greek phalanxes of Alexander.

In truth, there are sizable schisms within the GOP, such as the increasingly yawning one between the pro-cheap labor globalist plutocrats and the working stiff, which has finally surfaced over immigration. Yet it has taken a betrayal of the base as flagrant as Bush's amnesty plan to outrage Republicans.

Why? Because far more than Democrats, the typical Republican is a team player, the kind of fellow who won't let you forget that he played a little ball in school and, when the annual sales convention rolls around, is proud, deeply proud that he's helped make this the best

damn sales force in the industry! [Applause.] Equally masculine AFL-CIO rank-and-filers long helped the Democrats excel at the blocking and tackling of organizing winning campaigns, but they're getting old and losing a step at the ground game. Most of the Democrats' other white constituencies—feminists, gays, movie stars, New Agers, hipsters, and intellectuals—are too self-absorbed to build effective organizations.

Worse, many elements within the Democratic Party can't actually stand each other. The white "lifestyle" liberals welcome minorities as allies because they believe being on the same side as African-Americans against the white majority validates their feelings of self-worth. Yet to be frank—not that they would ever say it in so many words—they also regard blacks and Hispanics as scandalously reactionary on such crucial issues (to them) as gay marriage.

Meanwhile, the racial minorities are heavily Democratic both for newfangled identity reasons and for old-fashioned ethnic clout purposes that St. Tammany himself would have understood, but they are also more culturally conservative and view their white allies as smug, out-of-touch, and patronizing.

Moreover, although this is kept out of the press except when the occasional Jesse Jackson "Hymietown" outburst breaks through, more than a few minority Democrats disdain the lifestyle Democrats as Jews or perverts or Jewish perverts.

Less crudely, important white liberal constituencies such as the antiwar movement, the wealthy but fading mainline Protestant denominations, and the environmentalists are quietly becoming annoyed by the Jews who provide about half of the party's campaign contributions. For example, in 2000 the Arab-American Ralph Nader carried 2.7 percent of the national vote, but only 2 percent of the Jewish vote on the Green

Party ticket. In the past, it would have been unthinkable for a far Left organization to get a higher proportion of gentile than Jewish support, but the times they are a-changin'.

Finally, although black and Hispanic politicians swear eternal amity, in the high schools and prisons of trendsetting Southern California, as Roger McGrath has documented, the burgeoning Latino population is violently challenging blacks for mastery.

Fortunately, both the lifestylers and the minorities share a mutual distaste for the white union members, who are the one Democratic constituency proud to consider themselves average Americans. Unfortunately, the Democrats are still heavily dependent on blue-collar labor's money and get-out-the-vote elbow grease. And the aging guys in windbreakers know exactly how the other Democrats feel about them and return the sentiment with interest.

The Democrats can seldom appeal to one of their blocs without offending another, so the main message they can all agree upon is how much they hate George W. Bush. The problem with that strategy is that, yes, admittedly, the president is a national disgrace, but that also reflects badly on the nation that twice elected him, so a large fraction of patriotic Americans don't want to hear it.

While Democrats esteem themselves as more socially prestigious than Republicans, their electoral prospects are undermined by the faint whiff of failure that many Democratic voters exude, the impression that they resent their country and compatriots because they haven't quite fulfilled their own potential.

Surveys going back to 1972 have consistently found that more Republicans than Democrats consider themselves "very happy." In a 2005 poll, the Pew Research Center discovered that 50 percent more Republicans than Democrats rate themselves "very happy" and that "if



one controls for household income, Republicans still hold a significant edge.” Indeed, Pew reported that their multiple regression analysis of what makes people content showed “the most robust correlations of all those described in this report are health, income, church attendance, being married and, yes, being a Republican. Indeed, being a Republican is associated not only with happiness, it is also associated with every other trait in this cluster.”

While it may (or may not) be admirable of liberals to want to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable,” it’s also hardly unreasonable for voters to assume that the party whose members, on the whole, better manage their own lives could better manage the government.

Many white Democrats these days derive their sense of status, of identity, from their feelings of superiority, moral and intellectual, over the average white American. Democrats you see, are both more admirable because they believe everyone is equal and more intelligent because they have higher IQs. What? You didn’t know that? Well, it has been scientifically proven, according to the thousands of liberal websites that display a blue and red table showing that Democratic-voting states have vastly higher average IQs than Republican-voting states. For example, to choose two mostly white states, the average IQ in liberal Connecticut is 113 vs. 87 in conservative Utah, which means the median person in Connecticut would suddenly move up to the 96th percentile if transported to Utah.

In reality, this chart is an utter hoax, but it remains an unkillable fraud because it bolsters Democrats’ self-image as members of an oppressed elite. The two parties’ supporters actually appear to be cognitively on par. The 2004 exit poll showed that Kerry voters boasted about six weeks more school-

ing than Bush voters. Yet in the long-lost 2002 exit poll, supporters of Republican House candidates enjoyed the advantage in education, and in 2000, Bush and Gore voters tied.

Among whites, Democrats have received a little more education than Republicans but earn less money than their credentials would predict. That skew might be a key to the resentment of Middle America that is such a pervasive feature of Democratic psychology.

Even bigger than the income gap is the standard of living chasm. Democrats tend to live in places with much higher costs of living. Although they aren’t particularly rich themselves—Kerry won all three income categories under \$50,000 and lost all five above that—Democrats do like to live near the rich. For example, according to ACCRA, an organization that tabulates regional costs for corporations relocating employees, the cost of living in the biggest blue state, California, is 40 percent above the national average. In contrast, life in the largest red state, Texas, is 11 percent cheaper than the American mean.

Housing differs sharply in price between red and blue America. Bush carried the 20 states with the cheapest housing costs, while Kerry won the nine states with the most expensive. And the mortgage gap has been growing. Bush was victorious in the 26 states with the least home price inflation since 1980. Kerry triumphed in the 14 states with the most.

Imagine two cousins, one with a graduate degree making \$50,000 per year in a creative industry, living alone in a small apartment in a “vibrant” (i.e., dangerous and expensive) metropolis. The other with a bachelor’s degree earns the same income in an unglamorous business and lives with a spouse and children in a home on a quarter acre lot in a “boring” (i.e., safe and moderately-priced) suburb. Which one is more likely to vote Democratic?

Of course, Republicans can be hostile too, but their resentments tend to be directed outward toward foreigners, such as the French, who don’t get to vote, and upward toward America’s “cultural elites,” who are, by definition, limited in electoral strength.

And white Democrats are starting to die out slowly due to low fertility. In blue states, white people are less likely to marry and have children than in red states, where there’s more affordable family formation. Bush carried 25 of the top 26 states in white total fertility (number of babies per white woman), while Kerry was victorious in the bottom 16. In Utah, where Bush won 71 percent of the vote, white women average 2.45 babies. In the ultra-liberal District of Columbia, however, white women average only 1.11 babies and in Kerry’s Massachusetts 1.60. This disparity is no doubt even greater within states, with Utah Republicans averaging even more babies than their state’s average and Massachusetts Democrats even fewer.

Therefore, the Democrats are reliant on immigration and higher minority birthrates to keep them in the game demographically. That’s why Democratic senators voted 38-4 in favor of the Senate’s plan to put illegal aliens on the “path to citizenship” (in other words, make them voters) and increase legal immigration, while Republican senators voted 32-23 against it, and House Republicans are adamantly opposed. (Why George W. Bush favors the Senate plan remains mysterious.)

The Republicans might well falter enough that Democrats win big this fall. Yet if the Democrats truly want to return to being the natural majority party in America, they need to do some soul-searching about their feelings toward the American majority. ■

---

*Steve Sailer is TAC's film critic and a columnist for VDARE.com.*

# New Deals & Old Answers

The key to the Democratic Party's future may lie in its past.

By James P. Pinkerton

WHAT'S WRONG with the Democrats? In the May issue of *The American Prospect*, Michael Tomasky argued that his fellow Democrats need to develop "a politics of the common good," the sort of majoritarian thinking that "made liberalism so successful from 1933 to 1966." Today, Tomasky observed, Democrats lack "a big idea that unites their proposals and converts them from a hodgepodge of narrow and specific fixes into a vision for society." Ouch. But Tomasky aimed still more rhetorical punches at his own team: Dems "don't even think in philosophical terms and haven't for quite some time. ... They've all been trained to believe—by the media, by their pollsters—that their philosophy is an electoral loser."

We might add that a philosophy of raising taxes, hiring more bureaucrats and multiculturalists, keeping the borders open, endorsing gay marriage, cutting defense, and putting more trust in international organizations would seem to be a political loser. Yet Republicans are concerned, and rightfully so, about their party and its prospects. The neo-conservatives who dominate the White House have put forth policies on Iraq and immigration that have demoralized and divided even hardcore GOPers. And over on Capitol Hill, the majority party is sick with a different malady, incumbenitis.

But what about the Democrats? What might they do if they luck into power, thanks to Republican weakness? They may lack governing skills, but they suffer no lack of publishing skills: they can read about their problems, even if they can't solve them, and three recent books on

the Democrats' dilemma stand out because of their historical scope. While all three authors are united in their desire to help the party regain a salable political platform, they conveniently divide among them the last 100 years of their party's history, its rise and fall, each volume covering a third of the century.

Michael Kazin of Georgetown University, chronicling the life of William Jennings Bryan, reminds Democrats that they once routinely won the votes of Bible Belters, even prior to the New Deal "golden age." Then Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*, focusing on Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Hundred Days" in 1933, writes about that golden age, an era when Democrats were comfortably majoritarian. And completing the rise-and-fall cycle, Joe Klein of *Time* chronicles the subsequent decline of the Democrats, which he blames mainly on the malpractice of political consultants.

\*\*\*

Beginning with his title, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan*, Kazin signals to Democrats that he wants them to try something new—or, more precisely, something old. Bryan had been a two-term Congressman from Nebraska when he electrified the 1896 Democratic convention, held in Chicago, with his famous anti-gold-standard speech: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." The next day, the 36-year-old, sometimes dubbed "The Boy Orator of the Platte," won the nomination, although he was

defeated in November by Republican William McKinley. But Bryan was more than just a candidate, he was a movement; his twin motivations were evangelical Christianity and progressive economics. According to his beliefs—and the beliefs of the many millions who revered "The Great Commoner"—Christ and His Social Gospel were calling upon America to step up anti-trust enforcement, enact wage-and-hour laws, and institute an income tax. A tireless orator, Bryan stumped the country, gaining momentum for his policies, even as he was thwarted in further bids for political office. He lost the presidency twice more, in 1900 and 1908, but he had the satisfaction of seeing much of his progressive agenda enacted, including by such Republicans as Theodore Roosevelt.

Yet while Bryan was a strong proponent of federal power in domestic matters, he was mostly skeptical of Washington's efforts in the international arena. Historian Kazin, mindful of his audience in 2006, is careful to note that while Bryan supported the Spanish-American War in the wake of the USS *Maine* explosion, he opposed the larger project of American imperialism in the Philippines. And after being appointed as secretary of state in 1913, he resigned two years later, protesting the march toward world war in Europe.

But for all that, Bryan is probably best remembered for events at the very end of his life. In 1925, serving as guest prosecutor for the Scopes "Monkey" trial in Dayton, Tennessee—which put Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in the

courtroom dock—he won the legal battle, gaining a nominal conviction of high school science teacher John Scopes for teaching evolution. Yet Bryan died just five days after the trial ended.

Moreover, he lost the historical war of memory and reputation. Among those covering the trial was H.L. Mencken, who mocked Bryan during the courtroom proceedings and who penned a scathing obituary: “He seemed only a poor clod like those around him, deluded by a childish theology, full of an almost pathological hatred of all learning, all human dignity, all beauty, all fine and noble things. He was a peasant come home to the dung-pile. Imagine a gentleman, and you have imagined everything that he was not.” Mencken’s harsh judgment carried the day—and the decades to come, as anyone who has seen “Inherit the Wind” can attest.

Mencken was a conservative, of course, albeit a secular conservative with great hostility to religion. But as Kazin notes, with much lament, Bryan had already been split away from his natural allies on the Left even before the Scopes Trial. Back in 1916, journalist John Reed—yet to publish his famous pro-Bolshevik book, *Ten Days That Shook The World*—published a profile of Bryan for *Collier’s Weekly*, demonstrating the emerging chasm between the Great Commoner’s old-style religious liberalism and the new style of secular leftism. In Kazin’s telling, Reed “reduced Bryan to little more than a sideshow for yokels and Bible-thumpers, a man whose time had decisively passed.”

Indeed, Reed’s article, Kazin adds, “illustrated a key transition in the history of the American left.” The journalist Reed and the politician Bryan agreed on most economic issues, and yet the divide on matters “literary, philosophical, and sexual” was simply too deep. In other words, Reed’s enthusiasm for lefty economic justice yielded to his far greater

enthusiasm for *avant-garde* bohemian living. Thus the split between the Old Left (socially conservative, even puritanical) and the New Left (socially libertarian, even at the expense of class consciousness)—which would define the politics of the later 20th century—was visible even before the Russian Revolution.

In his own lifetime, Bryan synthesized social conservatism and economic liberalism. And while his views on race—he simply didn’t include blacks in his egalitarian vision—are unacceptable to all parties today, other views, according to Kazin, merit reconsideration. Bryan’s faith in Biblical inerrancy, for example, was couched in political as well as theological terms; Bryan worried that human affection—“the politics of the common good”—would be undone if man realized that he was here on earth because of Darwinian randomness, as opposed to Divine plan: “Christians who have allowed themselves to be deceived into believing that evolution is a beneficent, or even a rational, process have been associating with those who either do not understand its implications or dare not avow their knowledge of these implications.” And so the Social Gospel would be defeated by Social Darwinism, as well as the infinitely crueler ideologies emerging from Europe and Asia toward the end of Bryan’s life.

In Kazin’s sympathetic account, the life of Bryan looks appealing indeed; the author lauds his subject’s “sincerity, warmth, and passion for a better world,” further praising the man who epitomized “the yearning for a society run by and for ordinary people who lead virtuous lives.” Parenthetically, of course, we might ask of contemporary Democrats: does the vision of ordinary people leading virtuous lives sound like the party’s platform today? Are today’s Democrats notable for their non-elitism and homespunnery?

Some might say that Kazin’s description of Democratic virtues in the Bryan

era sounds more like Republican ideals today. And that might explain why the Democratic voters of yesterday are the Republican voters of today. If one were to look at an electoral college map of Bryan’s elections, one would see that the red-blue pattern is virtually the mirror image of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections; Bryan the Democrat swept the South and most of the Midwest and West, exactly what Bush the Republican did a century later. One painful difference for today’s Democrats: population shifts have radically adjusted electoral weight. When Bryan won Florida for the third time in 1908, the Sunshine State possessed a total of five electoral votes. When Bush carried Florida for the second time in 2004, the state gave him 27 electoral votes.

Yet modern Democrats seem to have forgotten that they once owned the allegiance of “the Solid South.” Here’s DNC chairman Howard Dean, a Vermonter, explaining it to *The New Yorker*: “The Democratic Party was built on four pillars—the Roosevelt intellectuals, the Catholic Church, labor unions, and African-Americans.” In other words, white Protestant Southern Democrats such as Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson have been tossed down the memory hole. One suspects that Southerners have noticed this disrespect, resolving to return it in kind.

And on a deeper spiritual level, Kazin concludes, it was a mistake for Democrats to “quarantine the sacred” out of politics. No wonder Bryan and his beliefs have disappeared from not only the Democratic tradition but even from the Democrats’ strategic vision.

The Left and the Democrats, influenced by Marxism over the last century, have absorbed much of the Marxist-materialistic worldview into their own worldview. All liberal intellectuals know that Marx declared religion to be the



“opiate of the masses,” but perhaps they don’t know that in that same passage, from his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx also reminded readers that religion is “the heart of a heartless world.” And that’s where Bryan might come in handy, even for atheists. America is prospering, but many of its citizens are suffering as the economy continues its endless churn of creative destruction. In a globalized America, there are many Forgotten Men. Surely many of these folks would appreciate a dollop of Bryanite Christian compassion in their politics, if the Democrats could bring themselves to offer it.

Can today’s Democrats come to grips with an ideology that once borrowed equally, as Kazin puts it, from Jefferson and Jesus? Can they put aside decades of increasing hostility to “religion in politics”? Will their desire for victory finally force them to make the changes needed to regain the trust of Bryan-Bush voters?

Those questions, and that challenge, animated Kazin to write his book. And while some Democrats, such as Jim Wallis, who last year published *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It*, seem eager to embrace a neo-Bryanite message, most Democrats still prefer to shy away from Bible-minded Bryanism—even if that means shying away from victory.

\*\*\*

Indeed, it’s easier, and more fun, simply to replay past victories—and that’s what Jonathan Alter’s *The Defining Moment: FDR’s Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope* does, recapturing that happy-days-were-here-way-back-when spirit. Alter’s chronicle, perhaps surprisingly, gives little credit to Bryan and his political tradition, even though Herbert Hoover—an expert witness, albeit a hostile one—once snarled that the New Deal was “Bryanism under new words and methods.”

*The Defining Moment* dwells instead on the life and times of Northerner Franklin Roosevelt. Its narrow-focus title notwithstanding, the book effectively doubles as a breezy biography, written in an anecdote-rich journalistic style. And since, as Alter reminds us, a quarter of American workers were unemployed in 1932, FDR had little need to concern himself with religious issues. So FDR, as chronicled by his latest biographer-admirer, stuck mainly to politics and economics. And in this same chronicle, the 32nd president is made out to be an antonym of the 43rd president.

Alter has found an unused sentence in a draft of a Roosevelt speech scheduled for Inauguration Day—a sentence that, if it had been uttered, might have given the new commander in chief a claim for emergency authority. In Alter’s breathless telling, this sentence was “dictator talk—an explicit power grab.” But of course, FDR never said anything of the sort, and so historians reviewing *The Defining Moment* don’t seem too impressed by this “scoop.” Yet Alter uses this might-have-been wording to illustrate his basic thesis: that Roosevelt was a moderate and prudential president.

Yet at the same time, Alter paints FDR as consciously Machiavellian, as distinctly un-Bryan-like. To put it another way, Alter portrays his subject as a figure who was great in his determination to use the presidency to help America, even if he wasn’t such a nice person to deal with. So we have a flawed person who was nonetheless a good president—what other more recent Democrat could Alter be Hope-ing that we think of?

As for the policy substance of the New Deal, Alter is too much a modern market-oriented liberal to be entirely in tune with the statist thrust of FDR’s agenda. So he uses the policy debates of the ’30s to argue that Roosevelt was first and foremost a problem-solver—once again, in sharp contrast to George W. Bush. To

help make that point, Alter contrasts the two men’s biographies, comparing their various adversities.

He reminds us that Bush drank too much in his 30s, recovering through willpower and self-discipline, so here’s his take: “But when discipline hardens into dogma, a president loses the suppleness to respond to problems. Bush’s adherence to routine—a frequent attribute of those who have beaten substance abuse problems—may have slowed his adjustment to new circumstances.” So Bush, in his stubborn non-adaptability, can be compared to Herbert Hoover, which puts him at about rock bottom in the minds of Democrats. By contrast, Roosevelt, in Alter’s account, suffering from illness, learned compassion as a result; in his perpetual search for physical improvement, FDR discovered the value of “bold, persistent experimentation,” which he then applied to politics. Starkly differentiating the two presidents, Alter lauds Roosevelt for having “turned flexibility into a principle.”

Any linkage between FDR and, say, Bill Clinton is probably not to be rejected by Alter or his Democratic audience. And it seems to be working: the liberal website Buzzflash.com enthuses, “We like *The Defining Moment*, because it is great to recall a time of hope . . . It’s nice to remember when you could have pride in your government.”

In fact, most Americans on this side of extreme libertarianism want to take pride in their government—they want things to work. So Alter’s competence-not-ideology argument resonates with more than just neo-New Dealers. The bottom line is that Roosevelt energetically tackled domestic problems; if FDR could establish the Civilian Conservation Corps in just four months, Alter asks, why has it taken Bush more than four years to secure U.S. ports or fix the FBI’s computer system? And don’t get Alter started about Katrina or what that

fiasco says about the efficacy of the federal government.

Still, Alter has chosen an easy subject to write about; he picked the most popular Democrat in U.S. history, then ladled on yet more praise. By contrast, Kazin's Democrat was in the minority in his time, holding views that are acceptable today to an even smaller minority of top Democrats. Alter writes about his party after its ship had come in, thanks to the Depression; the changes that FDR campaigned for and implemented were controversial, but they were immediately popular with the majority—which explains why the Democratic candidate was elected with an 18-point margin in his first presidential contest and re-elected by a 24-point margin, the greatest ever for a Democrat in U.S. history.

\*\*\*

Joe Klein's task might seem close to that of Kazin; his book, *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People Who Think You're Stupid*, could just as easily be entitled, *Democrats Lost*. But from a Democratic point of view, Klein actually has the most unpleasant task of the three authors: Kazin's Democrats were in the minority, but their economic ideas were soon to be in the ascendancy; Alter's Democrats were in the majority, and their ideas were actually put into law. By contrast, Klein is left to chronicle the descent of the party. Nobody thinks that most Americans will gravitate toward the idea of, say, Hillary Clinton or Al Gore pulling the big levers of the U.S. economy. If the Democrats win the White House next, the cause will be dissatisfaction with the ins, not enthusiasm for the outs.

The obvious problem with the outs is that they and their ideas are not popular. But Klein, although he comes close, can't quite bring himself to say it that bluntly. Instead, he argues that the Democrats, a basically good bunch,

have been given bad advice by their advisers—the consultants and handlers.

Klein begins his book in a safe and high place for Democrats, celebrating the life of Robert F. Kennedy, whom he regards as the last serious presidential candidate not wrapped in a cocoon of consultancy. Klein recounts RFK's speech to a mostly black crowd in Indianapolis the day that Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Two months before his own murder, Kennedy delivered the sad news of King's death to the audience, then quoted from the poet Aeschylus: "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the human heart. Until ... in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

A bleakly beautiful sentiment, and a bleakly beautiful moment, and Klein uses it for all it's worth to illustrate RFK's greatness as a solitary poet-politician, uncorrupted by the spin-doctoring consultant-ocracy. Well, maybe. Everyone knows that the Kennedy family always had the glamour as well as the cash to attract the best staff—what were those hirelings being used for? Although Klein quotes several Kennedy aides who were with RFK that night, the author doesn't entertain the possibility that maybe those aides were acting as—gasp!—handlers and consultants. Perhaps Adam Walinsky, for example, cooked up the memorable Aeschylus quote, even if the ex-speechwriter now prefers to tell Klein that Kennedy fished the words out of his own pocket.

But let's give liberal Baby Boomers a pass from critical scrutiny when it comes to Bobby, especially since Klein is so enjoyably merciless in his accounting of post-1968 Democrats. Klein's book is theoretically a look at the effect of consultants on both parties—he even includes a reference or two to me, in my Bush 41 days—and yet the bulk of the volume concerns the deleterious effect of consultants on the Democrats.

Here Klein is on sturdy footing, since he has been an on-the-ground chronicler of all the presidential contests beginning with 1972. And while much of the book is obviously a core-dump of articles and notes from three-and-a-half decades of reporting, his focus on the consultants provides a wonderful window into the changes in U.S. elections during that time. Yet for all the rich reportorial detail he provides, the even larger panoramic reality is this: Republicans have won seven of the last ten presidential elections—and that might be a sign that a force even bigger than consultants is moving American politics.

Plenty of Democrats saw the danger as it arose. Pat Caddell, for example, was once the hottest consultant around—in part because he was able to warn his big clients, George McGovern and then Jimmy Carter, of changes he had first observed as a teenager growing up in northern Florida in the late '60s. In that part of the country, he noted, working-class Democrats, folks who had been loyal to the party of Bryan and FDR, were falling away. As Klein tells it, "Caddell had begun his quest: to find a way to speak to those alienated Southern populists, to lure them back to the Democratic Party despite their essential cultural conservatism." Caddell was versed in all the new skills of polling and political symbolism, yet even so, his vote-quest on behalf of McGovern in 1972 proved difficult. Vote-questing was easier for Caddell and Carter in 1976. In 1980 it grew more difficult once again.

On many occasions, Klein comes perilously close to conceding that the Republicans won their elections not because of their consultants but because they were right on the issues. In describing Ronald Reagan, Klein observes, "he was right about the need for welfare reform and about the evilness of the [Soviet] empire." Well, if Reagan was right, where does that leave the Democ-

rats, who so furiously opposed everything Reagan tried to do? Recalling a 1981 article of his in *Rolling Stone*, Klein compares the Democrats to “happy brontosauruses in a turgid pool of self-congratulatory idealism.” No wonder the Democrats hired consultants and then hired more consultants—they needed them. It was bad enough that “the Democrats were losing their working-class base,” as Klein recounts, but even worse, they were losing their media base.

So by the 2000 campaign, Democrats were in full consultant-heavy frenzy. Klein draws out some lively memories of that year. Gore-Lieberman campaign manager Donna Brazile, for instance, recalls the busywork of all the consultants on her payroll: “They had focus groups three or four times a week. They had sixteen categories for white women.” But Gore wanted constant data-fixes: “He was on the phone with the pollsters every five minutes.” And in 2004, the John Kerry presidential campaign was no better; Klein dismisses chief guru Bob Shrum as “an ancient sort: a medieval courtier, a flatterer” who worked through Kerry’s wife to hatchet campaign rivals.

And yet we might ask: what was Kerry supposed to do? Was Kerry supposed to campaign for the White House as the man who had blanket-trashed Americans serving in Vietnam as “war criminals” back in 1971? Was that a good sell? Or was he supposed to seek the White House on the basis of his undistinguished record in the Senate? Or how about his voting record in 2003, when *National Journal*, the prestigious and soberly low-key weekly, rated him as the most liberal senator—port, even, of Teddy Kennedy? Would that have been a good plan? Kerry had little choice but to run a campaign that sought to cobble together “Shrumian platitudes,” as Klein calls them, such as “health care is a right not a privilege.” And it almost worked;

the ’04 election was one of the closest in U.S. history.

But while Klein’s critique of consultants is appropriately and amusingly scathing, we might conclude that any hopeful, especially a Democrat, reading Klein’s proposed solution is likely to exclaim, “Get me a consultant!” The author wants candidates who are gutsy enough to endorse “at least one idea, or program, that has less than 40 percent support in the polls.” Well, in truth, both parties support lots of programs that cater to special interests, which command the support of just a few motivated voters.

But it would appear, nevertheless, that the Democrats have more minoritarian platform planks than the Republicans. In a conservative America, a basically liberal party is undoubtedly well advised to hide its true nature from the voters. That’s why the Democrats rely on consultants: because they need all the help they can get trying to sell bicoastal blue-state ideology to the red-state heartland. As Michael Tomasky put it, Democrats have been trained—by electoral experience, many would say—to think that their basic ideology, much of it descended from the New Deal, is a political loser nowadays.

Klein, a self-described moderate, clearly understands the Democrats’ real problem, but can’t quite bring himself to say it. The real problem is that the party is still well to the left of the country; Democrats have an ideology that dare not speak its name, so it speaks instead in Shrumian platitudes.

As for Alter, yes, it was more fun to be a Democrat 70 years ago, when the Democrats were with the country.

But potentially the most powerful of these three works is Kazin’s. His call for a Bryanite Great Awakening is the sort of paradigm shift that could make red states blue. But Dems would have to find candidates who could embody the basic

cultural conservatism of the American people, including their religiosity, as Carter and Bill Clinton were able to do on their way to the White House. Carter, in particular, has since been vocal in telling fellow Democrats that they have to move back to the center on abortion.

Of course, the consultant mindset dies hard among liberals, perhaps because they know the unreconstructed truth about their ilk. Steven Waldman, former *Newsweek* reporter turned editor of Beliefnet.com, wrote a piece advising the Democrats how to win back the Christian vote, in which he offered this bit of help: “To frame abortion for this group, Democrats at least need to pretend that they want to reduce the number of abortions.” Waldman later postscripted that he was kidding when he advised the Democrats to lie about their position—he advises the Democrats to be sincere. Meanwhile, one of the few areas where the Bush Republicans unmistakably put points on the board is in the appointment of conservative federal judges.

So what will happen if the Democrats come back to power without doing any soul-searching, let alone soul-rediscovers? How will Democrats behave if they are restored without deserving restoration? Right now, Bush makes the Democrats look good. But if the same-old-same-old Democrats are left to shine on their own, based on their own merits—quick, what’s the Democratic position on Iraq? on immigration? on the ACLU vs. Christianity?—then the next Republican comeback might not be far away, and that will be a heckuva story for the Republicans, even if most of the books are still likely to be written about the Democrats. ■

*James P. Pinkerton is a columnist for Newsday and a fellow at the New America Foundation. He served in the White House under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.*



# Borrowed Empire

The dollar won't necessarily collapse if oil is billed in euros—but our crushing trade deficits might do the trick.

**By Paul Craig Roberts**

IN RECENT MONTHS a hot topic on Internet sites has been speculation that Iran will instigate a collapse of the dollar's value by billing its oil in euros. As the argument goes, Iran's desertion of the U.S. dollar would be followed by other oil producers, bringing to an end America's financial hegemony and severely affecting the living standards of most Americans. This Iranian threat is often said to be a main reason for Bush administration plans to attack Iran. Saddam Hussein is said to have provoked the Bush administration's attack on Iraq by harboring the same intention to switch oil bills to euros from dollars.

This argument assumes that the cost to the U.S. of oil being billed in euros is so great that it makes worthwhile wars of aggression that are illegal under international law, that turn most of the world against the U.S. and destroy its soft power, and that have massive financial costs running in the hundreds of billions of dollars—with no clear end in sight. Would abandonment of the dollar as oil currency impose costs greater than these on the U.S.?

The change, if it were to happen, would not be the catastrophe that some people believe. Saudi Arabia and the oil sheikdoms are too much in the American pocket to follow an Iranian move to euros, and the Europeans, faced with Asian competition, do not want a stronger euro. Moreover, the real question is not the currency in which oil is

billed but whether foreigners find it desirable to continue to accumulate and to hold dollar-denominated assets—stocks, real estate, bonds, and U.S. companies. America's oil bill is dwarfed by the size of the U.S. trade and current account deficits. If the United States continues to run budget and trade deficits, foreigners' investment portfolios can become so loaded with dollar-based assets that they cease to acquire them. That is what would lead to a sharp fall in the dollar's value and, perhaps, to the end of the dollar's role as world reserve currency.

I am not saying that a move by Iran and other oil producers to euros would have no effect on the dollar. Such a development would result in a lower transaction demand for dollars as a means of payment. But the real question is: what do oil producers and the rest of the world do with the dollars associated with America's large trade and budget deficits?

The deficit in our trade imbalance due to mineral fuels is small compared to the deficit due to our imports of manufactured goods. In 2005, the U.S. trade deficit in manufactured goods was \$506 billion, almost twice as large as the \$260 billion deficit for mineral fuels. Those speculating about the currency of oil bills could paint a darker picture by worrying about the currency used to pay bills for manufactured goods.

The fundamental point overlooked by worries about an Iranian oil bourse is

that oil is billed in dollars because the dollar is the reserve currency and, thereby, is acceptable as the means of international settlements. What is likely to dethrone the dollar is not Iran but Washington. Reveling in neocon hubris, not even Republicans any longer worry about deficits.

Deficits have different causes, and not all are equally worrisome. But the U.S. trade deficit is problematic for a variety of reasons. From 1990 through the first quarter of 2006, the U.S. trade deficit has accumulated to \$4.7 trillion. For just the first quarter of 2006, the deficit is \$208.7 billion—about twice the cost of one year's worth of war in Iraq. The trade deficit measures U.S. consumption that is not matched by U.S. production. In other words, Americans together are consuming \$2.3 billion more per day or \$1,610,000 more per minute than they are producing.

Free-trade economists, who seem to specialize in apologizing for red ink, say that our trade deficit is a very positive thing. It represents, they assert, the rest of the world's confidence in America's economic future. These economists say that the American trade deficit is the necessary offset to the capital surplus caused by foreign investment rushing into the U.S.

There are circumstances in which this explanation of a trade deficit would be correct. However, it is not a correct interpretation of the present case. The

current crop of deficit apologists misinterpret the U.S. capital surplus as real net foreign investment that is increasing America's ability to produce and to grow. In actual fact, the majority of this foreign investment is merely a change of ownership of existing U.S. assets from Americans to foreigners. The United States is paying for its excess consumption of \$2.3 billion per day by handing over the ownership of its existing wealth to foreigners. This worsens the current account deficit as the earnings on these assets now belong to overseas interests.

Another reason that our trade deficit is serious is that it has been growing faster than the economy—further evidence that foreign investment in the U.S. is primarily a change of ownership in existing assets and not new plants and equipment. In 1996, in real terms, the U.S. trade deficit was 1.0 percent of GDP. In 2005, it was 5.7 percent of GDP. In the first quarter of 2006, it was 5.9 percent of GDP. These are unprecedented percentages. When I was assistant secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration during 1981-82, the U.S. balance of trade varied between a surplus of 0.2 percent and a deficit of 0.2 percent.

One of the reasons for the unprecedented trade deficit is the offshoring of manufacturing and jobs. When U.S. corporations move production for American markets offshore and hire people in other countries to provide engineering and other services via high-speed Internet, goods and services that were produced in the U.S. are turned into imports. Free-trade economists who tout the benefits of Wal-Mart's low-priced Chinese goods do not tell you that the price you pay at the counter is only part of the full price. The other parts of the price are the American jobs that are transferred to China and the ownership of American assets that is transferred to the Chinese in order to cover our large trade deficit.

The important question neglected by American policymakers is: at what point does the rest of the world decide that the accumulation of additional dollars is folly? Can the U.S. run a trade deficit of 10 percent of GDP and still remain the reserve currency?

The answer to the question depends in part on whether those accumulating U.S. assets see some means by which the United States can balance its trade. American economists, such as Fred Bergston, believe the U.S. can bring its trade into balance by reducing consumption, that is, by undergoing a recession that puts people out of work and reduces their ability to consume. However, Charles McMillion of MBG Information Services points out that this strategy ceased to work in the 2001

the appreciation of the currencies of countries with whom we run trade deficits. But what magnitude of dollar depreciation is required to wipe out an annual trade deficit of \$800 billion, and what impact would such a large decline in real purchasing power have on our living standards? Devaluation is like inflation. It raises the prices of everything with foreign-made components, which today is almost everything. Just imagine what a significant dollar devaluation would do to U.S. gasoline prices.

These serious questions are given short shrift by free-trade economists who answer with mantras.

Today Americans, whether or not they are aware of it, are under the control of a government determined to achieve U.S. hegemony over the world.

## **THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT AMERICA'S SUPREMACY DERIVES FROM TWO RAPIDLY DIMINISHING RESOURCES—MANUFACTURING SUPREMACY AND THE DOLLAR AS WORLD RESERVE CURRENCY.**

recession when the trade deficit actually increased. Why did Americans import more during recession? Do we see here the impact of offshoring and growing dependency on foreign-made goods?

Another way of reducing the trade deficit is to export more. But how does a country that is offshoring its production of goods and services export more? (By more I don't mean in absolute terms but relative to imports.) It is possible that offshoring has permanently affected the tax base, the incentives of young people to enter the high-productivity and formerly high-paid occupations that are now offshored or filled with foreigners on work visas, and the ability of American industry to mass produce advanced technology products.

A third way of reducing the trade deficit is through dollar devaluation or

Neocons in the Bush administration advocate military attacks on Iran, Syria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. They threaten a pre-emptive nuclear attack on North Korea. Neocons worry that China might attain military parity with the U.S. by 2020 and advocate policies designed to wreck the Chinese advance. Writing in *The Nation*, Stephen F. Cohen documents the neocons' drive to marginalize Russia and to assert U.S. hegemony in Russia's legitimate sphere of influence. These aspirations are inordinate, as well as criminal, and they will bring America to ruin.

Neocons are ignorant and disdainful of economics. They assume that hegemony derives from military power and the will to use it ruthlessly. They do not understand that America's supremacy derives from two rapidly diminishing

resources—manufacturing supremacy and the dollar as world reserve currency.

America alone emerged from World War II with manufacturing capability. It is easy to dominate world trade when no one else can produce anything. The benefits that free-trade economists attribute to America's postwar experience were due to the impairment of every other country's ability to produce. Great Britain was impoverished by two world wars and overwhelmed with war debts. The Breton Woods agreement dethroned the British pound sterling and established the U.S. dollar as reserve currency. This has been the source of America's strength.

It is a strength that is close to exhausted by chronic budget and trade deficits that have sorely abused the reserve currency role, while the neocons' grand designs for hegemonic power completely ignore the diminished economic basis on which U.S. power rests. Today Asia, or even individual countries such as Japan or China, could easily topple American hegemony simply by dumping their holdings of U.S. Treasury bonds and abandoning the use of the dollar as reserve currency.

Tough-talking neocons who are creating conflict with our major bankers, such as China, and with energy-rich countries, such as Russia, are leading America into ruinous conflict that serves no sane purpose. Indeed, the U.S. could not even wage war in Iraq if the Chinese were not lending us the money. What Gordon Prather calls the "neocron-crazies" are likely to discover that the U.S. is about as hegemonic as Hitler was at Stalingrad—and the consequences of their will to power can be just as destructive for America. ■

*Paul Craig Roberts was assistant secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan.*

### **The revelation that the Department of the Treasury and the CIA have been routinely monitoring international banking transactions**

should be seen as part of the Total Information Awareness program proposed by former Defense Department contractor John Poindexter three years ago. Poindexter's proposal, which assumed that the government needs to know everything about everyone all the time, was publicly rejected by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld after public and media outcry. With White House support, it was subsequently quietly revived and integrated into the much broader surveillance program run by the NSA that has been data-mining telephone, fax, and e-mail transmissions. The data is shared across the intelligence community, including the FBI, and employs link analysis to uncover suspicious patterns that may have terrorist connections. The electronic bank transactions that are being monitored have provided significant leads but not recently. Bank transaction linkage analysis resulted in the capture of al-Qaeda operative Riduan Isamuddin, better known as Hambali, in Thailand in August 2003. Hambali, believed to be the key financial link between al-Qaeda and the radical Indonesian group Jemaah Islamiyah, was also the mastermind behind the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200. There was also an alleged early 2003 operation in which the bank transaction database helped identify a U.S. citizen later convicted of helping an al-Qaeda member launder \$200,000 through a Pakistani bank. Since 2003, however, the program has not produced any new information resulting in exposure of terrorist activity. In the wake of the arrest of Hambali, professional terrorist groups like al-Qaeda have understood the security vulnerability of wired international funds. Couriers carrying cash now often service their direct funding requirements, and money used for operations is very often raised locally to avoid any financial trail.



### **The improbably named House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment**

has responded to traveler complaints by demanding that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) take steps to improve its travel watch list. According to the subcommittee, TSA frequently engages in information dumps to expand the database. As more names of suspected terrorists are discovered worldwide, the list becomes longer and more inclusive without any effort to add further identifiers to determine whether the Abdul Mohammed who lives in Des Moines might be the person of the same name who was identified in Kashmir. When names pop up on the list as a traveler checks in, the "hit" frequently has to be resolved through a manual check of files, which almost always results in a missed flight or worse. This would presumably be acceptable if anyone were actually detected as a result, but law enforcement sources suggest that no terrorist has ever been caught because of the TSA list. The current watch list just does not work and, worse, once you are on the list, it is almost impossible to get removed. Plans to introduce a much more inclusive and complicated system called Secure Flight, in which travelers register in advance to establish their identities, have stalled due to technical problems, privacy protection issues, and lack of funding.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.*



# Afghanistan on the Edge

Insufficient troop strength and rampant corruption imperil the nation-building project.

By Stewart Nusbaumer

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN—President Bush recently called Afghanistan “the first victory in the war on terror.” Earlier Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld boasted that Afghanistan was “a model of success for Iraq.” Here is the truth: there is no victory in Afghanistan, and it’s a model only for disaster.

In the five years since a U.S.-led coalition ousted the Taliban, the radical Islamists have reorganized and re-established themselves in the countryside, and today Afghanistan is embroiled in a full-fledged guerrilla war. Suicide attacks are surging, U.S. air strikes are twice as frequent as in Iraq, combat-related deaths in the last two months total nearly 1,000, Taliban attacks number a dozen every day, bombs are exploding in central Kabul, and numerous provinces are devoid of any reconstruction activity. After recently rushing several thousand new troops to Afghanistan, European nations are considering sending several thousand more.

Bob, who works for a foreign security firm he doesn’t want me to name, between sips of hyper-potent tea explains the stick-and-carrot strategy. I’ll condense his fable—one Bob insists came true a half century ago in Malaysia.

The stick of military force clears a contested area of insurgents, enabling the carrot of economic development to win the “hearts and minds” of the people. The stick and carrot work in tandem: stick clears, carrots take root, stick clears more and more carrots take root. Eventually, economic carrots are everywhere and the military stick retires to Florida.

“You Yankees have to remember,” Bob is getting worked up—it might be the tea—“when trying to win hearts and minds, you don’t blow bodies to smithereens. That’s a fundamental point.”

OK, a great story with a twist of British sarcasm, but I want the caffeined contractor to explain his earlier statement, “The United States is falling flat on its bloody face again.”

Bob leans forward, “The U.S. came to Afghanistan with a tiny stick so the Taliban, the drug lords, the warlords, the tribes—the whole gang of usual Afghan thugs—crushed its carrots.”

“That sounds bad.”

“You can’t rebuild a country when thugs control the countryside.”

It’s hard to argue with a Brit when he’s right. The U.S. military umbrella to implement reconstruction never materialized. There were not enough troops, and most of them were focused on eliminating al-Qaeda before being transferred to Iraq. As fast as schools were built, they were burnt down. A military commander in Kandahar recently pleaded with NGOs not to build any more schools because they will just be destroyed.

The spiraling cost for private security kills other public-works plans. “We’re not doing anything down there,” said an NGO employee from Helmand province, a Taliban and poppy stronghold. “The security situation is very bad. That makes construction projects too expensive.” A RAND Corporation study determined that Bosnia—a success story by comparison—has 19 soldiers per 1,000 residents, while Afghanistan has 1 soldier

per 1,000. On the way to victory in Afghanistan, someone forgot to bring the troops.

“If anyone ever did a study on where the money really goes,” says an Asian NGO whose contract for rural electrification was cancelled because of the violence, “like for salaries and overhead—security is our biggest cost—they would be shocked. You know, everyone here is making nice money.” He adds, “Officially we’re not supposed to talk to the press.”

In his tent-office sitting behind a table piled high with papers and books, parliament member Ramazan Bashar Dost has no problem talking to the press. “It is mafia system in Afghanistan—the cabinet, the UN staff, big embassies like U.S. and Japan staffs, also economic staffs of EU. The system has no transparency. USAID not doing competitive bidding—American company awarded contract, subcontract work to Afghan company. It’s mafia system with lots of corruption.”

His dark eyes project gentleness and determination. “We the Afghan and the American people have the same interests, but minority of Americans and Afghans killed system. Americans pay much taxes at home,” he hesitates, “their money in Afghanistan is not used for good things.” He places his hand on my forearm, his voice remains soft yet strong, “Twelve billion dollars much money, but life for Afghans is worse today. Afghan people are hungry, no jobs, life is harder. Much money go to corruption.”

In Afghanistan, the international community for reconstruction and development is large and diverse—800 NGOs

from large private corporations to tiny humanitarian groups with a mixture of motives and goals ranging from making a fortune to saving people. But the trend is not good. "This is not the Peace Corps," says an American with nearly four decades of Peace Corps and NGO experience, "This is cutthroat business. But don't use my name."

Under the cloak of rebuilding this sinking land—hunger is rampant in the countryside, infant mortality atrocious, daughters are sold to pay debts, open sewers run through the cities—heavy greed and nasty deals are slurping at the financial trough of reconstruction. A lot of carrot money is ending up in foreign bank accounts, and a lot of misery is remaining untouched in Afghanistan.

So the number of troops is vastly insufficient. Reconstruction is at a near standstill. The funding process is corrupt and riddled with favoritism. The Taliban is flourishing and drug lords are thriving. If the plan is to destroy Afghanistan, then things are going well. All we need now is to insult Afghans. No problem!

You can walk around Kabul every day for weeks and not see a single one of its 3,000 foreign residents on the street. Not one eating in an Afghan restaurant. Not one riding in a local taxi. You see them as blurs whizzing past in luxury SUVs.

I once suggested we eat in an Afghan restaurant. "You'll play Russian roulette with your health," an Austrian cautioned. I was thinking about moving to another guesthouse. Came the dismissive reply, "That's run by Afghans!" I said let's take a local cab. "You want to get kidnapped?" The safer and better life in Kabul is always foreign, and ten times more expensive than the local. If fear does not steer one to the safer and better foreign, then UN and embassies' regulations will ensure segregation remains ironclad in Afghanistan.

"It's not right," 21-year-old Sabeir complains, his self-confident stare suddenly melting into pained eyes. "This is our country, and they have nothing to do with us. We can't even go to their places. That makes me very angry!"

To gain a people's respect and trust, you don't segregate yourself from them, you don't push them away, and you don't insult them. You participate in their society. You learn from them, as they learn from you. You treat them with respect, and they will generally respect you.

"The third night I was here," says an American accountant in Kabul, "they said we were having an office barbeque in the evening and I should come. So I went. But there were only expats. I asked, 'Where are the Afghans?' I was told, 'Oh, we don't do that here.' You know, I wondered if the Afghan workers were invited. I don't think they were."

Another American, this one working in an alternative livelihood project in the volatile south: "We have Afghan guards standing on the street in front of our compound, but their office told them to move to the roof for more protection. But I made them move back down to the street. Their job is to get shot, they are our warning system." This man runs a major project funded by the U.S. government. Somehow, I don't think he's winning many "hearts and minds." Not many foreigners in Afghanistan are.

Five years after the U.S. promised to create a secure and prosperous Afghanistan, it's clear we've failed. The Taliban are back. Poverty never left. Afghanistan remains at the bottom of nearly every social indicator. Hope for a better life is quickly disappearing, replaced by a rising bitterness toward America and Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai. Forget the rhetoric of U.S. politicians promising the moon, we did not even deliver the basics to Afghanistan.

"How long we supposed to wait?" asks the street chorus of unemployed

and poverty-stricken. "Where does all the money go?"

A string of U.S. defeats—Vietnam, Lebanon, Somalia, and now Iraq—demonstrate America's inability to fight modern wars. Our hi-tech military with massive firepower has no wars to fight; the conventional Gulf War was an abnormality not likely to be repeated anytime soon. Meanwhile, our troops lack the doctrine, equipment, and training for the low-intensity guerrilla and irregular wars that we do fight. We have a great military; it's just not good at fighting today's wars.

Without the capacity to subdue guerrilla armies, the even more difficult task of nation-building is impossible. Nation-building is never more than establishing a rudimentary structure for locals to then develop. The U.S. military/reconstruction effort failed to build this basic bridge. But there may still be hope.

Later this month, NATO assumes responsibility for providing security in the turbulent south and in the fall for the entire country. The new coalition commander, British Lt. Gen. David Richards, advocates the "Malaysian ink spots" approach—Bob's military stick protecting economic carrots slowly expanding the safe zone. The promise is a better way to fight this war.

But ideas without tools are promises that will not be kept. Will NATO increase the number of combat troops? Curtail the corrosive corruption and excessive profits? Expand economic resources for development? Smash the neo-imperialistic social partition? If it's merely a European face applied to a failed American effort, then Afghans will be stuck with more of the same failure until the country really explodes. ■

---

*Stewart Nusbaumer served in the U.S. Marines in Vietnam and today is editor of InterventionMag.com.*

# Our Dangerous Times

Today's conservatives are eager to trade freedom for security.

By James Bovard

ON JUNE 23, the *New York Times* and other papers revealed that the Bush administration has been vacuuming up records passing through a Belgian hub for international banking. According to Treasury Undersecretary Stuart Levey, the United States government may have conducted "hundreds of thousands" of warrantless searches of personal financial data.

Some government lawyers doubt the legality of the program, and administration officials told the *Los Angeles Times* that it had only been "marginally successful" at going after al-Qaeda.

No matter. The exposé set off perhaps the biggest boom in conservative press-bashing since Watergate.

The White House quickly re-labeled the surveillance program the "Terrorist Finance Tracking Program" and with near unanimity, the Right fell into line. President Bush angrily declared, "the disclosure of this program is disgraceful... for people to leak that program, and for a newspaper to publish it, does great harm to the United States of America." Vice President Cheney asserted that the *Times* article "made it more difficult for us to prevent attacks in the future" and "will enable the terrorists to look for ways to defeat our efforts."

The same day the story hit the street, Andrew McCarthy whined on National Review Online: "Yet again, the *New York Times* was presented with a simple choice: help protect American national security or help al Qaeda. Yet again, it sided with al Qaeda." Heather MacDonald commented in *The Weekly Standard*

that "The *New York Times* is a national security threat. So drunk is it on its own power and so antagonistic to the Bush administration that it will expose every classified antiterror program it finds out about, no matter how legal the program, how carefully crafted to safeguard civil liberties, or how vital to protecting American lives."

But the notion that the program was "carefully crafted to safeguard civil liberties" was a leap of faith—and conservatives used to assume the opposite: that liberty needed to be guarded against government. There was no judicial approval of these searches and no congressional oversight of the program, but the side of the aisle once distrustful of federal schemes nodded blind assent.

Was it so long ago that prominent conservatives vigorously opposed Bill Clinton's power grabs and his trampling of due process? Or was there a hidden asterisk noting that government power should only be limited when Democrats occupy the White House? Now security trumps—or, in reality, political promises of security. Or perhaps, like the prior proclamations of fidelity to limited government, the fixation on safety is simply another ruse to smear liberals and spur donations.

In any event, for Republican loyalists, this controversy provided twin opportunities: they could simultaneously rally around their president and vent their disdain for the mainstream media.

According to L. Brent Bozell III, president of the Media Research Center: "The last thing we need is the *New York Times*

aiding and abetting the terrorist movement. And that's exactly what they're doing by divulging these secrets." Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich declared that the *New York Times* "hate[s] George W. Bush so much that they would be prepared to cripple America in order to go after the president."

Some commentators favored solutions that could reduce the *Times*' long-term pension liabilities. Talk show host Melanie Morgan declared that she "would have no problem with [*New York Times* editor Bill Keller] being sent to the gas chamber" if he were convicted of treason. Radio host Tammy Bruce declared that what the *Times* had done might be worse than the betrayal of atomic weapons secrets by Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

The usual suspects joined in with the usual sneers. Ann Coulter railed, "*New York Times* publisher 'Pinch' Sulzberger has just been named al-Qaida's 'Employee of the Month' for the 12th straight month... The safest place for Osama bin Laden isn't in Afghanistan or Pakistan; it's in *The New York Times* building." Columnist Michelle Malkin denounced "the Terrorist-Tipping *Times*" for "proudly publishing all the secrets unfit to spill since 9/11." Rush Limbaugh derided the *Times*: "I think 80 percent of their subscribers have to be jihadists."

I appeared briefly on Fox's "Hannity & Colmes" the day the *Times* story was published, and my criticism of the warrantless surveillance provoked angry e-mails, including the helpful suggestion that "every know-nothing lying jackass



like you should be rounded up and gassed with the Iraqi poison gas that does not exist according to you.”

Few commentators raised any questions about the White House storyline. Press Secretary Tony Snow asserted: “I am absolutely sure they [the terrorists] didn’t know about” the surveillance program the *Times* exposed. Snow and indignant conservatives seem to assume that al Qaeda funders are as dumb as the Miami “terrorists” busted the same day the *Times* story came out. These are the wizards who begged their FBI informant for money to buy shoes and asked him to provide them with military uniforms so that they could march into federal office buildings and take them over. In reality, Bush has repeatedly talked of aggressive efforts to surveil international financial transactions, and administration officials testified to Congress that al Qaeda was avoiding large banking systems and instead relying on cash couriers.

The Bush administration simplified the issue: freedom of the press kills. Snow warned that “the *New York Times* and other news organizations ought to think long and hard about whether the public’s right to know, in some cases, might overwrite somebody’s right to live.” Treasury Secretary John Snow, in a letter to Bill Keller, denounced the *Times* article as “irresponsible and harmful to the security of Americans and freedom-loving people worldwide.” “Freedom-loving people” thus becomes a trump card against the First Amendment. And “freedom of the press” threatens to become the single biggest obstacle to the U.S. government forcibly imposing freedom on the rest of the world.

Republican members of Congress hustled onto the bandwagon. Rep. Peter King, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, declared, “We’re at war, and for the *Times* to release information about secret operations and methods is treasonous.” Rep. Ted Poe con-

demned the “Benedict Arnold Press.” Rep. Tom Price wailed that “some in the media seem determined time and again to simply hand over our playbook to barbaric terrorists.” Rep. Jack Kingston simplified the issue wonderfully: “It’s one thing to mix your criticism with [Bush] with your war position, but it’s another thing to mix your hatred of George Bush with putting people’s lives in danger.”

Moreover, Republicans exploited the *Times* story to give themselves and the Bush administration pre-emptive absolution in case inept federal agencies fail to deter future terrorist onslaughts. House Speaker Dennis Hastert declared, “Loose lips kill American people.” Rep. Peter King said that the *Times* would be to blame if there is another terrorist attack in the U.S.: “The blood will be on their hands.”

The House, voting on party lines, passed a nonbinding resolution that “condemns the unauthorized disclosure of classified information by those persons responsible and expresses concern that the disclosure may endanger the lives of American citizens.” They overlook the fact that Bush administration officials routinely distribute classified information to friendly media sources when they think it will win points.

Since the Watergate era, it has been a Washington commonplace that “the cover-up is worse than the crime.” But in the post-9/11 era, exposure is worse than abuse. Rather than suffering any sort of backlash from the intrusive program, Bush and Cheney are milking *Times*-bashing at Republican fundraisers around the country.

The vast majority of conservative commentators have never shown the slightest interest in the efficacy of the administration’s antiterrorism policies and share the Bush-Cheney attitude that a federal program is legal if the president says so. It seems to be widely assumed that what is good for Bush is

good for America, so cheering on the war will make us safe.

Survival of the Republican congressional majority may hinge on suppressing criticism of administration policies, and this storm of media-bashing may be crafted to keep the lid on news about other government surveillance systems. Over a period of barely six months, leaks resulted in Americans learning that the feds were conducting thousands of warrantless phone taps in the U.S., that they had arm-twisted telephone companies to turn over the calling records of tens of millions of Americans, and that our government has been sifting through international banking records to its heart’s content. *National Journal* recently revealed that the Bush administration is continuing to pursue Total Information Awareness, even though Congress compelled the formal abandonment of that program in 2003. The endless threats of treason prosecutions against whistleblowers, reporters, and editors may be a last ditch attempt to prevent Americans from learning about secret presidential orders that would make the NSA wiretapping look like kids’ stuff.

Just because much of the media is biased does not mean that the Bush administration is trustworthy. Perhaps it is naïve to expect commentators to be more honest than politicians. But the “treason” stampede among right-wing talking heads indicates just how much conservatism has changed. And the Right’s knee-jerk defense of every Bush power grab has so decimated their credibility that prominent conservatives will have as much standing to gripe about Leviathan during a reign of someone like Hillary Clinton as her husband has to complain that American culture no longer respects chastity. ■

---

*James Bovard is the author of Attention Deficit Democracy (Palgrave, 2006) and eight other books.*

# Mother Russia No More

While the Cold War impoverished it, post-communist Russia must confront a new deficit: more deaths than births.

By Pavel Kohout

RUSSIA HAS A BIG PROBLEM. No, it's neither a war nor terrorism. Nor the economy, which is in good shape. By most measures, Russia has never been doing better than now. The economy quickly recovered from the financial and banking crisis of 1997. Public finance, too, is prospering as the oil and gas windfall swells the trade balance and helps to pay down Russia's once terrifying debt.

The government has enough money to improve the situation of pensioners and other poor social groups. State-employed workers—government officials, policemen, doctors, nurses, teachers—are also seeing their salaries increase. According to some observers, salary raises for public servants have already visibly mitigated the problem of corruption. Taking bribes was once necessary to make a living, as official salaries were next to negligible; this is no longer true.

The rising post-communist nations of Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia, are often referred to as New Europe, with the capital "N" proudly denoting rosy growth prospects for the recently freed half of the European continent. Russia's GDP has grown by 5.5 percent over the past year. Estonia has experienced an 11.5 percent boom, and Latvia's economy has added 13.8 percent.

Impressive, isn't it? Remember the winter of 1990? Germans were sending food aid to struggling Russians. Now

starvation and empty shelves are but a distant memory, and Russians—as well as other East Europeans—are discovering the attractions of a developed consumer-oriented economy. As household incomes grow, so do consumer expenditures: everybody wants a flat-screen TV, a new car, a new home.

Mortgages and credit cards stand behind the improvement of living standards. In the Czech Republic, when the mortgage business started back in 1996, there were double-digit rates, drastic income requirements, and only 50 percent maximum coverage of the property value. The application process alone was martyrdom. Now, rates are in single digits, the coverage is usually 100 percent, and the process is hassle-free.

So what is the problem? Many papers have been written about the demographic slump of the European Union, but the EU's population woes pale in comparison to the mass dying out of East Europeans.

As material welfare and prosperity advance, one would expect that people would have more confidence in the economy and thus bear more children. People form families when they are doing well and feeling safe, don't they?

No, they apparently don't. Russians seemingly prefer consumption to child bearing and rearing. Despite some very modest improvement over recent years, the total fertility rate remains well below the hurdle of 2.1, which is necessary to maintain a stable population. By 2005,

the population of Russia had declined to 143.5 million people, reduced by over 5 million since 1993. And according to demographic forecasts, within two decades, the Russian population could decrease to 130 million.

Until approximately 1990, the birthrates in Russia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, and Poland were fluctuating around 2.0, a shade below replacement level. What happened after the fall of communism? What caused the decline? One common answer is the hedonism and selfishness of the young generation, and to some extent that may be true. But that easy answer is far from complete.

The first question one should ask is why birthrates were relatively high under the communist regimes. Did people love communists so much? Did they believe in the stability and prosperity of the centrally planned economies?

No, they did not. Most people in communist countries hated the regimes. To a person who has never experienced such oppression, it is difficult to explain the peculiarities of daily life under a communist totalitarian regime, but for starts, the word "career" was a dirty one. A decent person would hardly seek a very ambitious career since that usually required collaboration with the Communist Party or, worse yet, the secret police. People thus had lots of time for their families since very few workers would find it worthwhile to work overtime. A poor performer could not have

been fired anyway. And it made little sense to earn more money than your neighbor as you could not spend it in a half-empty supermarket.

When coming home, a man and his wife would rarely watch TV. Of two channels, he could chose between Party Congress Live on Channel 1 and a propaganda movie on Channel 2 (or vice versa). At the end of the day, there was plenty of time for the family.

Outside of the family were hypocrisy, lies, spies, and boredom. There were no newspapers, only propaganda leaflets. There was no money, only funny paper good for shoddy products in socialist retail stores. Nothing was real; life and society looked and felt fake. All values were debased except for one: the family, the sole place values remained genuine. Love and affection for your dearest ones survives all regimes. That's why people had lots of children even under the conditions of relative poverty, lack of freedom, and uncertainty about the future.

In the wake of democratic revolutions, social conditions shifted rapidly. After the initial economic recession—a painful yet necessary reform period—many things changed for the better, though good old family values got lots of competition. Career-building no longer presented moral problems, and suddenly there were plenty of things one could buy. People could travel, study, and work abroad. There were dozens of TV channels, computer games, new sports. At the same time, however, incomes diverged. The luckier ones pursued careers and bought Mercedes cars and Rolex watches. The less lucky struggled.

Having a child imposes significant costs—felt particularly keenly in a period of economic transition. Statistics confirm that Russian family finances are tight: on average, per capita income in childless households is 1.5 times higher than in households with children. So it's

not surprising that about 70 percent of Russian women of fertile age presently either have no children or only one child. And until now, the government has provided scant incentive for altering this situation. The size of the monthly state allowance for children is very low: 70 rubles per child up to 16 years of age or 140 rubles in single-mother families. (As 70 rubles equals approximately \$2.60, the value of such support is rather ridiculous.)

Across cultures, poverty generally concentrates in two primary groups: households headed by single mothers and the elderly. Yet in Russia, plummeting birthrates notwithstanding, the government is focusing relief on the aged. In March 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that pensions will be indexed by 8.5 percent, instead of the 3 percent previously planned. Moreover, last year the Russian government announced a plan to double pensions by 2008. And an increasingly large segment of the Russian population is aging. In 1998, for the first time the number of retirees in Russia exceeded the number of children and juveniles under 16—by 110,000. By 2004, that number had grown to 4.2 million. Right now, the number of children under 14 is 2.5

times lower than the number of retirees. According to current demographic predictions, by 2016 retirees will comprise 25 percent of the entire Russian population.

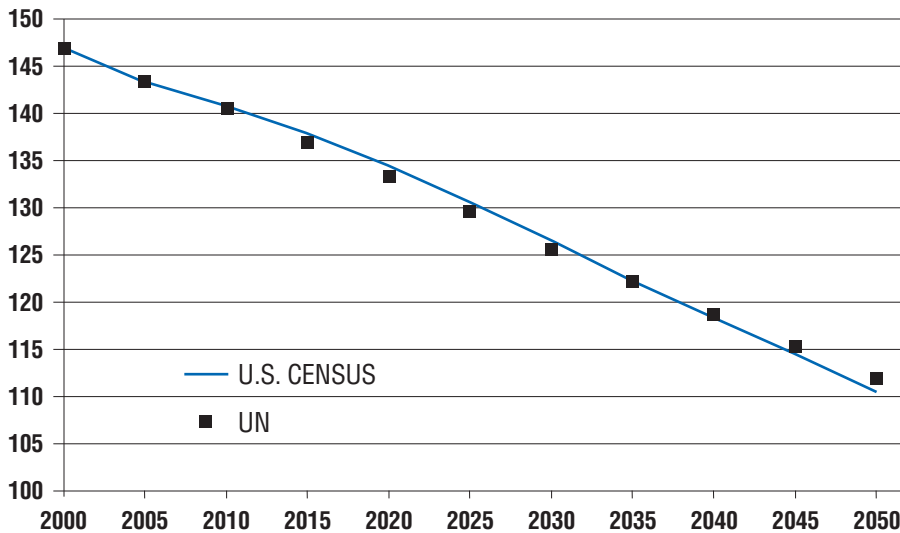
This policy of protecting retirees while neglecting children is not a Russian specialty. It is widespread among the East European countries. The most obvious explanation is that retirees have voting power while children do not, and the number of children's parents has now fallen below the number of retirees. A rational government that seeks to maximize its public approval would naturally pour money to the most powerful voters' groups at the expense of the weaker groups. While one may consider such a policy cynical, that's the way decisions are made, not only in Russia but in developed European countries, too.

Further complicating matters, if low birth rates are a common phenomenon across Europe, a high death rate is a specific feature of Russia in transition. In 2004, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births by 790,000 people, or 1.5 times. The male death rate in Russia is one of the highest in the world, and 30 percent of the dead are men of working age. Average life expectancy for men is 13 years less than that of

### Birthrate by Country

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2003
<b>Britain</b>	2.19	2.71	2.43	1.89	1.83	1.64	1.71
<b>Germany</b>	2.1	2.37	2.03	1.56	1.45	1.38	1.4
<b>France</b>	2.93	2.73	2.47	1.95	1.78	1.88	1.89
<b>U.S.</b>	3.09	3.65	2.48	1.84	2.08	2.06	2.1
<b>Russia</b>	2.89	2.56	2.0	1.86	1.9	1.21	1.32
<b>Poland</b>	3.71	2.98	2.26	2.26	2.05	1.34	1.22
<b>Romania</b>	3.14	2.34	2.90	2.43	1.84	1.31	1.27
<b>Czech Rep.</b>	2.69	2.11	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.14	1.18

**Russian population forecasts by UN and U.S. Census, million people**



women (58.8 vs. 72 years). The leading reasons are alcoholism and cancer, though the suicide rate exceeds that of Central Europe by 2.5 times among males and 1.5 times among females. Furthermore, in Russia there are twice as many deaths in traffic accidents as there are in other European states.

Natural population loss has been partly compensated by immigration, but this mitigating factor is almost played out. The government is developing a new migration policy, but thus far the main effect of existing legislation has been to take immigrants out of the shadow economy. An increase in the absolute number of incoming migrants is likely to be minor. Moreover, if other trends are not reversed, immigration cannot be counted on to perpetuate Russian culture, even if it slightly boosts sagging population numbers.

According to the World Bank, if current low birth and high death rates continue, Russia will lose approximately 18 million people by 2025. According to U.S. Census and UN estimates, the population loss will not be so severe, but the trend lines still run downward: by their count, Russia's population will decline

to about 130 million by 2025 and to 111 million by 2050.

Mindful of this looming demographic crisis, President Putin has proposed a ten-year program under which any woman who has a second child will get up to \$110 more per month in child allowances, will be able to take leave from work for up to 18 months while receiving 40 percent of her salary, and will get subsidies for child care. The most novel aspect of Putin's proposal is to give a cash bonus of over \$9,000 to any woman who has a second child, an initiative that Nobel Prize winning economist Gary Becker estimates could cost up to 1 percent of Russian GDP.

Professor Becker believes that Putin's financial approach might indeed work, even though other countries have had only mixed success with similar efforts. Guy Laroque and Bernard Salanie have evaluated the system of monthly child credits in France, and their estimates indicate that child subsidies to French women have raised France's total fertility rate by some 5 percent, or by about 0.1 children per family.

Putin's proposal is much more generous than the French program, although

the Russian subsidies would only apply to a woman who has a second child. Becker writes,

Extrapolating the French results would give a very large effect of the proposed Russian system of subsidies and bonuses on Russian fertility. ... I would guess that Russian fertility would increase by about 10-20 percent from current levels, or from the present total fertility rate of 1.28 to perhaps as high as 1.55. Since even this upper limit leaves Russian fertility far below the level (2.1) that would be sufficient to maintain its present population level, such a generous subsidy system is unlikely to revolutionize the way Russians view large families.

The Putin plan may thus be part of the solution but is not a panacea. It may work for Russia but not for countries that are not as oil-rich. Improving fertility rates among most developed countries would require something else.

No, reintroducing the Iron Curtain is not an option. Neither is banning TV or computer games. No one wants to dampen these rapidly recovering economies. But for all the new prosperity, something has been lost—the family.

It must recover the role it used to have before the age of welfare state. It must regain the status that the government stole from it. The family must get more money, the state less. For no amount of subsidy will save dying Russia. Cutting taxes and social security programs is the only effective way to promote fertility and family values—and this is currently anathema in modern Europe. ■

*Pavel Kohout is an associate of the Center for Economics and Politics in Prague.*



# Attention Wal-Mart Shoppers

Those low prices come at a high economic cost.

**By Sen. Byron L. Dorgan**

“NO MORE BULLS\*\*T!” That was the unorthodox campaign slogan Norman Mailer used when he ran for mayor of New York City in 1969. I suppose it wouldn’t be politically correct to use that slogan today. The bulls would sue. But it would be the perfect description of the inane defense of our current trade policy by those who can’t seem to understand the difference between success and failure, winning and losing.

How could we have allowed corporate America and their outsourcing cheerleaders to turn truth on its head? Deficits are good. Job loss is fine. It will all work out in the end for us. Don’t file those theories under economics. Put them in the fiction section.

P.T. Barnum used to say, “There’s a sucker born every minute.” Sure, but we don’t want a sucker in charge of our trade policy. And the fact is that the American people are being played for suckers. The story can most easily be illustrated by describing the recent marriage between Wal-Mart and China. Didn’t know they were dating? Well, it surprised us all. All of a sudden this behemoth American retailer, which had its roots in a small town in Arkansas, fell head over heels for the Chinese. Actually, their affection is for the low-wage Chinese workers. It is a simple marriage, really: Wal-Mart gets to sell products that are made by cheap labor from China. China inherits the jobs that used to belong to American workers. And the unemployed and underemployed American workers get to buy cut-rate imported Chinese shirts, shoes, and

electronics at an American Wal-Mart. Seventy percent of the products on its shelves come from China.

Everybody wins. Right? Well, hardly. There is no “happily ever after” here.

Okay, you say with a heavy sigh, is this going to be the same old beating up on Wal-Mart? Well, Wal-Mart is important because it is America’s largest corporation—the biggest in the world—and it is not just any company. It is the one that perfected an entirely new business strategy: to get products created abroad with low-wage labor and sell the products in U.S. stores manned by poorly paid American workers. This leads to low prices and lots of customers, but it is a strategy that hurts our economy.

Wal-Mart workers take home an average of \$250 a week, according to a PBS report, and about 70 percent of these workers leave in the first year. (Wal-Mart disputes that figure but did not provide a different one.) One-third of the workers are part-time, so they are not eligible for benefits. The health-insurance package requires a 35 percent contribution—more than twice the national co-pay average—so more than half of those Wal-Mart workers who are eligible can’t afford it.

It clearly is a business plan that works to fatten profits, but in the long run it undermines much of the economy we have relied on to be a great, healthy country. Some important American values are being sacrificed in order to find the lowest-priced gallon of mustard or twelve-pack of underwear.

According to a 2003 *New York Times* report, Wal-Mart is the nation’s largest

grocer, toy seller, and furniture retailer.

“More than 30 percent of the disposable diapers purchased in the country are sold in Wal-Mart stores, as are 30 percent of hair-care products, 26 percent of toothpaste and 20 percent of pet food. Wal-Mart has nearly 3,000 stores in the United States, and plans to add an additional 1,000 over the next five years. Increasingly, the company is taking its formula abroad; Wal-Mart is now the largest private employer in Mexico.”

That is an astonishing amount of economic power. Ask the local lumberyard, the local grocery, hardware, or drug-store how they fare when Wal-Mart shows up. Ask the local community leaders if they notice a difference when the business community is dominated by one big-box retailer that runs all the small businesses out. In WWII, soldiers venturing into newly occupied territory often found the words, “Kilroy was here,” scrawled onto a wall. The soldiers found it inspirational. What ought to be inscribed on the plywood covering boarded-up Main Street businesses, is “Wal-Mart was here,” and that is hardly inspirational.

Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott says, “We are at 8 percent of the nonautomotive, nonrestaurant sales in the U.S. I’m not sure why it couldn’t be 24 percent. We’ve really done a great job for our customers, lowering prices, lowering the cost of living, raising the standard of living. Is it really unhealthy for us to be 32 percent? Could we be four times bigger right here? I don’t know why not.”

Well, I'll tell him why not. Good business is not just about low prices. It is also about good jobs. And the Wal-Mart business plan is antithetical to good jobs for Americans.

Through sheer buying power, Wal-Mart can dictate the price they will pay, which forces companies to abandon any sense of loyalty to their workers. They must ramp up production and crank down costs. Inevitably, they must move production to China. Up goes the trade deficit. Wave good-bye to the American jobs. Then, Wal-Mart plants these stores on the edges of thriving communities where they become a death star, swallowing up all the small businesses that cannot compete with Wal-Mart's buying clout. Say good-bye to even more American jobs in these small towns. You can always put on a blue smock for less money and likely no health-care plan. Because fewer businesses are paying taxes, local taxes rise and charities suffer because the mom-and-pop stores are cumulatively more generous than the Walton Gang.

The inequities of global trade have come home to roost in small-town America as they debate about what a new Wal-Mart will do to their communities. Some claim that those who work against a Wal-Mart store in their city are interfering with the free-market system. But the free market only works when you have many competitors. When one of the competitors becomes large enough to clog the arteries of the free-market system, even on a local level, then the market is no longer free. Innovation is retarded, and in essence you have the same stagnation that exists when there is no competition.

Back in the 1950's, companies like Woolworth's, Coast to Coast, Sears-Roebuck, and Montgomery Ward set up shop in towns across America, but these companies did not dwarf other businesses in the community. They did not

have the market power that a company like Wal-Mart now has. With a one-two punch, Wal-Mart knocks businesses and their employees out. As these small businesses are put out of work, their employees are forced to get off the canvas and work for the source of their misery. According to a 2004 UC Berkeley study, Wal-Mart paid 31 percent less than surrounding employers.

Wal-Mart calls its employees "associates"—and there used to be a three-legged, one-eared blind dog with fleas in my hometown named Lucky. Being an associate sounds better than it is. The company scrimps on employee pay and is stingy with benefits. Lower operating

Wal-Mart will control 35 percent of the grocery and pharmacy industry by 2007. Wal-Mart has about 3,000 total stores including 1,400 supercenters. For every supercenter that opens, statistically, two grocery stores close.

This is economic cannibalism. Wal-Mart spokeswoman Sarah Clark says working families enjoy \$2,300 in savings annually by shopping in Wal-Mart. That doesn't go very far if Wal-Mart costs you your job, health benefits, and forces your local taxes higher. A 2004 economic impact study of the UIC Center for Urban Development in Chicago concluded that a Wal-Mart on the west side, while bringing in 200 jobs,

THE DEMOCRATIC STAFF OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE ESTIMATES THAT **ONE 200-PERSON WAL-MART STORE MAY RESULT IN A COST TO FEDERAL TAXPAYERS OF \$420,750 PER YEAR—ABOUT \$2,103 PER EMPLOYEE.**

costs for labor win out. And that forces other retailers wishing to compete with Wal-Mart to follow their lead, requiring suppliers to move their factories abroad and main-street businesses to suppress the wages of their workers.

As grocery stores struggle to stay open when a Wal-Mart Supercenter comes to town, they are forced to cut wages. In 2003, 70,000 union employees of Kroger, Safeway, and Albertsons went on strike in Southern California to protest wage cuts by the grocery chains that were in mortal fear of the 40 new supercenters opening in their territory. According to a PBS "Frontline" story, the average wage of the Wal-Mart employee, at \$9.64, was about \$10 less than the average hourly wage of a supermarket employee in that California job market.

Wal-Mart has nearly a 20 percent market share of the grocery business and 16 percent market share of the pharmacy business. It is estimated that

would cost surrounding businesses 266 jobs. That's less disposable income in a community, more workers on unemployment, and less tax revenue.

Because Wal-Mart wages are in many cases not living wages, the company uses taxpayers to subsidize its labor costs. The Democratic staff of the Committee on Education and the Workforce estimates that one 200-person Wal-Mart store may result in a cost to federal taxpayers of \$420,750 per year—about \$2,103 per employee. A report by Congressman George Miller found, "Among Wal-Mart employees, some single workers may be able to make ends meet. Others may be forced to take on two or three jobs. Others may have a spouse with a better job. And others simply cannot make ends meet. Because Wal-Mart fails to pay sufficient wages, U.S. taxpayers are forced to pick up the tab. In this sense, Wal-Mart's profits are not made only on the backs of its employees—but on the

backs of every U.S. taxpayer.” Of course, that one won’t show up on your receipt when you check out.

With its immense retail sales reach—\$258 billion in sales for the fiscal year ending in January 2005—Wal-Mart has been able to force American companies to move factories to China so they can keep wholesale prices low. Wal-Mart has about 30,000 suppliers, each under enormous pressure to squeeze every last bit of efficiency out of them.

Try to put \$258 billion in annual sales in perspective. That amounts to selling about \$40 worth of merchandise annually to each of the 6.5 billion inhabitants of this planet. Wal-Mart CEO Lee Scott bragged in a 2005 speech that if his company were a country, economically it would be the 20th largest in the world.

Now connect this to China, whose repressed labor force makes this all possible. Wal-Mart, as a company, is China’s eighth largest trading partner, ahead of entire countries like Russia, Australia, and Canada. In 2004, 80 percent of Wal-Mart’s imports, some \$18 billion worth, came from China.

According to U.S. government data, the United States imported \$196 billion in goods from China in 2004 and was on track to hit \$260 billion in 2005, while exports from the United States to China looked to rise from \$35 to \$44 billion.

A massive trade deficit, stagnant wages, plain old materialism, and recklessness have put us all in a tough spot. What has happened is that the American government and Americans have spent themselves into a deceptively deep hole—according to the Economic Policy Institute, that \$660-billion 2004 trade deficit means that foreign lenders are gathering up our currency as they finance the gap created by our spending spree, a debt equivalent to \$5,500 per household per year. Obviously, that sort of mounting debt cannot continue. But it did continue in 2005 and grew to over

\$700 billion. As a measure of our individual financial vulnerability, consider that the average household credit card debt is over \$7,000, and the savings rate is zero. Meanwhile, Americans have an accumulated \$8 trillion in mortgage debt, and 40 percent of that is interest.

As Americans we have to understand that economic vulnerability is as dangerous as military vulnerability; in fact, the former causes the latter. The terrorists who have us in their sights understand this as well. When, as a nation, we carelessly allow ourselves to become as financially vulnerable as this president has, it is dangerous to our national security.

It will be interesting to see what happens in the way a car wreck is interesting if you are not in it. China, as one of our major lenders, has a stake in keeping the U.S. economy going. China needs our market. We need their dollars to finance our indebtedness. Quite the conundrum, we have here, isn’t it? So we have to lower the trade deficit methodically without causing a major shock to either economy—it will, of course, be a major shock to international corporations, and they will fight it tooth and nail with their legions of lobbyists and barrels of political donations.

In China, there are 320 million potential employees and buyers under the age of 14. As they are exposed to all the things technology has to offer, we cannot expect they will be satisfied in the long term to accept ten-cent-an-hour jobs. The Chinese government knows that, too. They have to raise wages and the standard of living or face a revolution. A rural population equivalent to the entire U.S. population is expected to migrate to cities for employment, yet the electric grid is tapped out and housing must be built. We are seeing just a shadow of the Goliath China will become.

It is estimated that there are now about 20 million cars in China. Some predict that it will grow to 120 million in

the next 15 years. That is a huge market, but don’t hold your breath expecting American car makers to get a fair deal to compete for those sales. U.S. negotiators in the most recent trade deal with China stuck it to American workers and arranged a sweetheart deal for China. Our side agreed that the Chinese could charge a 25 percent tariff on U.S. cars sent to China, while we would impose only a 2 1/2 percent tariff on Chinese cars sold in the United States. Just as we have seen cars from Japan and Korea gain a foothold in our own domestic market, we will see Chinese cars on our highways in just a few years. Chinese auto manufacturing is on pace to pass the number two manufacturer of vehicles, Japan, by 2015 and is nipping at the heels of the American industry.

As we contemplate China’s future, we would do well to look back at our own industrial growth to understand where China is headed. While our economic evolution set a breakneck pace in a hundred years that took us from Model Ts to space shuttles, with the incalculable growth of technology, we can expect China’s transformation to be swift—and it is time we stop treating these economic juggernauts as if they were the equivalent of 98-pound weaklings at the beach. We’re the ones getting sand kicked in our faces. ■

---

*Sen. Byron L. Dorgan is the senior senator from North Dakota, currently serving his third term, and chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee. This essay is adapted from From Take This Job And Ship It: How Corporate Greed And Brain-Dead Politics Are Selling Out America by Byron L. Dorgan. Copyright (c) 2006 by the author and reprinted by permission of St. Martin’s Press and Thomas Dunne Books, LLC. Books available July 25, 2006 wherever books are sold.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*The Devil Wears Prada*]

### Hell on Heels

By Steve Sailer

PERHAPS YOU SHOULDN'T mention this around the feminist thought police, but women often hate working for other women. While men compete for status by including as many underlings as possible in their hierarchies, women gain prestige by excluding the maximum number from their cliques.

Running *Vogue*, the most celebrated fashion magazine, might be the ultimate in cliquishness, and Anna Wintour, who in 1996 became the industry's first million-dollar-per-year editor, is famously frosty toward anyone beneath her in celebrityhood.

English journalist Toby Young tells the story of a *Vogue* executive's teenage daughter interning at the office. Once, as the intimidating editor bore down upon the awestruck girl in a hallway, the stiletto heel of one of Wintour's Manolo Blahniks snapped, sending her sprawling at the intern's feet. The teenager had been warned by her mother that "under no circumstances was she to speak to Ms. Wintour—*ever*. Consequently, she gingerly stepped over Anna's prostrate form. As soon as she turned the corner, she sprinted to her mother's office... Had she done the right thing? Yes, her mother assured her. She'd done exactly the right thing."

Wintour has erected a persona for

herself that "glories in self-created aristocratic solitude," like a character in a Camille Paglia-directed revival of "The Importance of Being Earnest." Wintour resembles an earnest cross between Oscar Wilde's fashion-fixated duo, Gwendolen, whose motto is, "In matters of utmost importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing," and her Gorgon mother, Lady Bracknell, who observes, "Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present."

Personally, I find Wintour's blatant snobbery refreshing compared to the faux egalitarianism of the high-tech world. When interviewing for a job at chipmaker Intel in 1982, I was told that no employee got an office, not even Vice Chairman Robert Noyce, the co-inventor of the silicon chip. Of course, I had to stand on my tiptoes and peek into the billionaire's cubicle, which turned out to be 600 square feet, with Impressionist masterpieces hanging on the gray fabric dividing walls.

Lauren Weisberger, a recent Ivy League grad hoping for a toehold in the writing business even if she had to associate with frivolous fashionistas, worked for a year as Wintour's junior personal assistant. Weisberger then wreaked revenge on her demanding boss by publishing a bestselling *roman à clef*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, about an evil editrix who demeans her idealistic, talented (and, let us not forget, Ivy League-educated) assistant by making her fetch her dry-cleaning.

Fortunately, the comic movie adaptation, with Meryl Streep as "Miranda Priestly" of *Runway* magazine and Anne Hathaway as the ingénue, is more enjoyable than the book, with both characters

rendered more sympathetically. Hathaway's scenes away from the office, where she must choose between her sous-chef boyfriend (Adrian Grenier) and a glamorous Jay McInerney-style novelist (Simon Baker), are lackluster, but the film wakes up whenever Streep is on screen.

Whether or not being high priestess of the fashion arms race is a job worth doing at all—former *Vogue* editor Diana Vreeland defined her role as giving "them what they never knew they needed"—Streep's character clearly does her job well. She uses her prodigious recollection of every layout ever published to decide imperiously whether the hamster wheel of couture has spun far enough around that it's time, say, to "reinvent the drop waist dress" all over again.

At the Condé Nast building in Manhattan, nobody dares share an elevator with Wintour. You let her ride up in splendid isolation while you wait for the next one. The film allows you to understand why, showing Streep making her daily grand entrance to the office while rattling off long lists of must-dos for her assistants to get hopping on. The social awkwardness of a communal elevator ride would distract her as she gathers her thoughts for the day's work.

Rather than rant like Cruella De Vil, Streep underplays, dropping lines like "Tales of your incompetence do not interest me" as softly as only the truly feared dare. The downside to Streep's understated performance is that diminishing returns set in. Brilliant as it is in initial conception, Miranda's lack of dynamic range makes the second half of the film less exciting. ■

Rated PG-13 for some sensuality.



## BOOKS

*[Where Did the Party Go? William Jennings Bryan, Hubert Humphrey, and the Jeffersonian Legacy, Jeff Taylor, University of Missouri Press, 344 pages]*

# Disappearing Democrats

By Bill Kauffman

"I AM A POPULIST," declares political scientist Jeff Taylor in the preface to *Where Did the Party Go?*, wherein he traces the decline—disappearance, really—of Jeffersonian populism within the democracy by contrasting the careers of William Jennings Bryan and Hubert Horatio Humphrey. Midwestern tub-thumpers, White House also-rans, on the surface, Bryan and Humphrey might pass for hyper-voluble cousins. But scrape off the paint and they are as different as a family farm and IBM, 1776 and 1945, Christian peace and atomic war.

Taylor's book, rich in detail, forensically forceful, is no routine exercise in comparative politics. *Where Did the Party Go?* amounts to a populist reinterpretation of the 20th-century Democratic Party. The author is both an exhaustively thorough researcher and a pleasingly partisan writer: he is on the side of the old America of "puritans and populists, of anabaptists and anarchists," and laments its paving over by midcentury "Democratic and Republican leaders [who] agreed on the ends of American life: anticommunism and economic growth." The possibility that these might represent the end, and not the ends, of American life never bubbled up into the effervescent oratory of Hubert Humphrey. But it would have been gospel to William Jennings Bryan.

Taylor has devised a 12-tenet definition of the protean term "Jeffersonianism," which is really more a tendency

than an ideology and savors of a decentralist, libertarian populism. The party of Jefferson today may be as empty as the party of Hamilton is full, but Taylor ends the book with a rallying cry for "a coalition of the populist Left and populist Right" in opposition to "plutocracy and imperialism" and "a domineering state and a materialistic world view." It's the Nader-Buchanan alliance that never quite cohered between 1992 and 2004, though the crimes of the Bush Octennium may yet bring about this devoutly wished civil union. Ah, but we are getting ahead of our story.

William Jennings Bryan, the "eloquent voice of rural and small-town America," the Nebraskan "heir and enlarger of the agrarian revolt" against industrial capitalism who "carried no Eastern state in his three runs for the White House," comes down to us as the tired, pathetic biblical literalist of the smug, mendacious, middlebrow play "Inherit the Wind." On those rare occasions that he is hauled up from the memory hole he is mocked as "a clownish figure symbolizing the country bumpkins and religious zealots who tried to resist the coming of the modern world," with all its accoutrements: manhattans, the Manhattan Transfer, the Manhattan Project.

Bryan had an idealistic streak but we need not idealize him. He was a politician, after all, a "practical ideologue," a majoritarian Democrat who was partially deaf in his libertarian ear. Like Lincoln, his ambition was the little engine that knew no rest. A fundamentalist Christian imbued with a Jeffersonian faith and the commitment to uplift of a Social Gospelite, "he was a champion of small farmers, urban laborers, and small businessmen." He saw these people not as beggars at the banquet, not as noisy almsmen hollering for handouts, but as the true face of America. Restating the Jeffersonian motto "Equal rights for all; special privileges for none," he denounced "ship-subsidy grabbers," "trust magnates," and "the privilege-hunting and favor-seeking class." (Predictably, his campaigns were chronically underfunded.) It might seem odd that

Taylor calls a candidate who advocated nationalization of the railroads a believer in "a laissez-faire economy," but Bryan himself professed it: "The safety of our farmers and our laborers is not in special legislation, but in equal and just laws that bear alike on every man. The great masses of our people are interested, not in getting their hands into other people's pockets, but in keeping the hands of other people out of their pockets."

Bryan was also "a quasi pacifist and anti-imperialist" who made his 1900 campaign a referendum on imperialism and stood up against the jingoes in opposing U.S. entry into the First World War. He supported a national referendum upon a congressional declaration of war, one of the last full-throated shouts of the radical populists. (FDR, the *New York Times*, and Wall Street Republicans burked it for good in 1937.)

Bryan fought Morgan and Rockefeller on behalf of the Dakotas, and he made no apology for it. Among his supporters was a South Dakota druggist whose son, Hubert Horatio Humphrey, would become the grinning, garrulous U.S. senator from Minnesota, burbling fount of the "Politics of Joy," Lyndon B. Johnson's much abused vice president, and the 1968 Democratic presidential nominee.

Young Humphrey was a Willkie Republican in 1940, but during the postwar mop-up, when old American radicals were kicked out of a newly war-enamored Left, Humphrey busily extirpated Bryanism from the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party so that the populist FL might merge with the Trumanite hawks of the Democratic Party. "A Republican less than five years earlier," Taylor notes of HHH in 1947, "he was now reading life-long Farmer-Laborites out of the party." The Humphrey fusionists vanquished "the traditional agrarian populists within the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party." Thus was born the DFL, a party with all the sects appeal of Walter Mondale.

As a good social democrat—today's neocon elders were almost all Humphrey men—HHH hated pacifists, isolationists, and radical American dissenters and purged them with the fervor

of Tailgunner Joe. And as a good liberal of the American Century, "Humphrey was an enthusiastic supporter of every U.S. war from 1938 to 1978." For by 1950, liberalism meant tanks and conscription and a foreign policy designed by rootless products of elite prep schools, well-bred Mr. Joneses who had no idea what was happening to them when finally, in the 1960s, the fodder rose up against their fathers.

Humphrey, twisting the Jeffersonian slogan, desired "special privileges for all," cracks Taylor. An "exponent of paternalistic statism," he never met a welfare program he didn't vote for—no matter if the beneficiary was Lockheed, Boeing, or a single mother. He stated confidently that "big corporations are a source of strength and economic vitality." No hippie-dippy small-is-beautiful sap for the Triple H!

The Hump had his moments. His finest was his speech to the 1948 Democratic convention in which he dared delegates to "get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights"—not a bad line, if a recipe, in another context, for never-ending war. Of course he was hardly braving obloquy and rotten fruit. Backed "by Americans for Democratic Action, by big city bosses, and by a majority of the delegates," he stole the civil-rights issue from Henry Wallace and made himself a Young Man to be Considered. Throughout his career he raised piles of money on Wall Street; his 1968 campaign was "mostly engineered within corporate boardrooms, luxury suites, and White House offices." (30 percent of Humphrey's war chest was raised from contributions of \$500 or less, compared to 85 percent of George Wallace's 1968 treasury.) By his career's sputtering end, he was, as Hunter S. Thompson pegged him in *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*, "a shallow, contemptible, and hopelessly dishonest old hack."

Taylor quotes Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he

stands at times of challenge and controversy." Bryan resigned from Woodrow Wilson's cabinet when that sour Presbyterian began humming "Onward, American Soldiers." Even after Wilson's death, he "refused to serve on a committee to raise funds for a foundation to honor the late President" because the late president was not deserving of honor.

Humphrey hewed to LBJ, ignoring this sage advice from a Farmer-Labor friend back in Minnesota: "Don't you cut, shuffle, or deal with that son of a bitch, he's owned lock, stock and barrel by Texas oil and gas interests." In one obscene paroxysm, HHH called Vietnam "our great adventure—and a wonderful one it is!" The "Politics of Joy" spiked with napalm. Humphrey never broke with a Democratic president, and even when other Cold War Democrats were expressing tentative doubts over the "imperial presidency," he cautioned that the wise path "lies not in weakening the presidency, but in choosing individuals for that office who can be trusted with its vast powers." That, in a rancid nutshell, remains the Democratic response to executive tyranny.

"Intellectually, Bryan was a boy who never left home," sneered the court historian Richard Hofstadter, for whom home-leaving—home-rejection—was a sign of maturity. The Hump, by contrast, recalled that "when I was a young man in South Dakota, everything—everyone—even the state itself seemed so anonymous. I always felt—gosh, I'll live and die out here and nobody'd ever know that I ever was." There was nothing selfish about his flight to fame, he assured the interviewer. He went to Washington because "I just thought somebody should know what all those good people [the anonymous South Dakotans not on Rushmore] are all about. Who's going to help them with their problems if no one knows they're here?"

It's the sort of self-revelation that a *Time* columnist would find humanizing but an American should find nauseating. Taylor observes, "Apparently it did not occur to Humphrey" that South Dakotans and Minnesotans "might have the ability and desire to help themselves."

His life validated by the issuance of his Senate license plate, the Hump never quite got over the thrill of giving meaning to the lives of the little people. In 1958, he marveled, "Today, the federal government's influence is everywhere, in the states, in the cities, in the towns, on the highways, in the airways, in the Main Street bank, in the country store, affecting [a citizen's] life in a hundred different ways every hour of the day, every day of the year." Taylor adds drily, "He viewed this as a positive development."

Humphrey never was found on the populist side of an issue. Nor did he ever stand for principle in defense of an unpopular cause. He red-baited ferociously in the late '40s and sponsored legislation to outlaw the Communist Party USA. As Taylor writes, "he opposed the traditional Farmer-Labor Party in the mid-1940s, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the mid-1960s, the New Left and Counterculture in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the right-to-life movement in the mid-1970s." This quartet says as much about Taylor as it does about Humphrey. In each case the enemy of populism was the Democratic establishment in all its mottled ingloriousness: New Deal bureaucrats, racist Dixiecrats, Vietnam War technocrats, and urban feminist harpycrats.

Among Taylor's virtues is his spirited refusal to inter persons and ideas in the coffins labeled "liberal" and "conservative." He knows too much political history for that. Thus Taylor can lump together the Bonus March, the Scopes trial, Huey Long's Share the Wealth program, the Nye Committee's investigation into the "merchants of death," and Fighting Bob LaFollette's Progressive Party (he's in favor of them all, I think) as "counterrevolutionary acts...waged on behalf of traditions, values, and beliefs" of middle Americans. He understands the New Left to have been a "Jeffersonian revival" that sought to recover "traditional liberalism's rejection of capitalism, statism, militarism, and imperialism."

Carrying the story beyond Humphrey, Taylor pokes about in the Democratic carion and finds nothing but little Huberts

(without the original's kinetic appeal) scurrying about: Gore, Kerry, Hillary Clinton. The values associated with the Democracy B.E. (Before Empire)—“decentralization, frugality, pacifism, and isolationism”—are about as potent a force as Anti-Masonry in contemporary Democratic politics. (He holds out hope for Wisconsin Sen. Russell Feingold, who cast gutsy votes against the Iraq War and the Patriot Act and seems to have a LaFollette gene. We shall see.)

As for Bryan's legacy? Taylor nominates Sen. Robert Taft, California Gov. Jerry Brown, and maverick Wisconsin Sen. William Proxmire as “the most balanced, most fully realized Jeffersonian politicians of the post-New Deal era.” He rightly sees in the Brown, Perot, and Buchanan campaigns of 1992 the seeds of a new populism that is antiwar, antiglobalist, and anti-Wall Street, the avenging Jeffersonian ghost haunting the ruined castle along the Potomac.

Taylor, who has been active in the Green Party, seems to write off the Democrats when he says, “It may be that the only hope for a Jeffersonian reunification of the common people in the electoral arena is the creation of a broad-based, ideologically diverse populist party that encompasses everyone from the Green Party on the Left to the Constitution Party on the Right.” That dream always dissolves abruptly in the light of social issues, though coalition builders might try the federalist solution: let San Francisco be San Francisco, and let Utah be Utah. Mind your own damn place.

Referring to a hawkish column about Humphrey Democrat Henry Jackson written by Gore advisor Donna Brazile and titled “What Would Scoop Do?” Taylor answers, “Probably the opposite of what Jesus would do.”

What should the Democrats do? Read Jeff Taylor. Get over the Hump. Inherit not the wind but the wisdom of William Jennings Bryan and Thomas Jefferson. ■

*Bill Kauffman's most recent book is Look Homeward, America (ISI Books).*

*[Performing Music in the Age of Recording, Robert Philip, Yale University Press, 304 pages]*

## Acoustic Feedback

By R.J. Stove

ANY HISTORY OF recorded sound that, like this one, ignores structuralism and quotes Wodehouse is manifestly on the right lines. Behold Jeeves's creator recollecting in antipathy his own voice, when its lugubrious timbre emerged from the dictaphone with the opening paragraphs of his latest novel:

It sounded too awful for human consumption. ... There was a kind of foggy dreariness about it that chilled the spirits. ... [It evoked] one of those dim tragedies of peasant life which we return to the library after a quick glance at page one. I sold the machine next day and felt like the Ancient Mariner when he got rid of the albatross.

This is but a variant of the emotions that several thousand musicians have felt about the whole recording process: they cannot live with it or without it. Intelligent surveys of the musician-recording symbiosis have been all too meager. Several glorified supermarket tabloids (of the “Who's Pavarotti Porking 2Nite?” genre) exist. So do impenetrable semiotic musings replete with tributes to Derrida. So does a narrowly discographic literature, wherein owlish trainspotters feud over the matrix numbers of Take 1 versus Take 2 for Alfred Cortot's 1928 version of Chopin's C sharp Minor Prelude.

But a serious, properly researched general history of recordings versus live performances and how each interacted with the other ... well, best of luck finding one. Till now, with this *tour de force*—masterwork is, in these circumstances, a perfectly legitimate term—by a lecturer at Britain's Open University. Robert Philip wrote impressive music

journalism for years in the long-defunct monthly *Records and Recording*, but not even his best insights there hinted at what he has achieved here.

Classical record buyers form a tiny minority of record buyers in general. Philip is consciously appealing to a tiny minority within a tiny minority: historic-recordings buffs, who are now rather well catered for through Naxos, Pearl, and other adventurous CD firms, but who previously had to cope with the whims of mail-order special-interest record societies. Of course, in suitably postmodern collegiate circles, the very definition of a historic recording becomes almost infinitely pliant. Some of us know music undergraduates who have never once seen an LP and whose idea of Dark Age conducting is not a Willem Mengelberg but a Neville Marriner. Philip operates at a much higher historiographical standard.

His main interest lies not in the very earliest discs but in those that came after the mid-1920s' establishment of electric recording. Orchestral pre-electrics resulted from so many then inevitable studio distortions as to be freakish even to read about, let alone to hear. A typical studio ensemble, we learn, would comprise only six first violins and a few violas, a clarinet, a cello, a bassoon, a contrabassoon and, rather than a double-bass, a tuba. Even with a respected conductor like Arthur Nikisch at the helm, the sound quality suggested a short-wave broadcast from Mogadishu. Cuts to scores were legion and shameless: the first “complete” recordings of Schubert song-cycles had items missing. Almost always the performer remained under pressure to fit his musical conceptions within 78 rpm side-lengths' procrustean bounds, although sometimes Toscanini and Stokowski would reduce this handicap by having two recording-machines going alternately.

To counterbalance its vices, 78 rpm technology possessed certain virtues that the tape recorder's 1940s advent ended: “There was no safety net,” Philip reminds us, “in the days before tape-editing. What you hear on the disc is what was actually achieved.” Yet even the tape

recorder failed immediately to impose on music lovers today's CD-generated expectations of flawlessness. Philip rightly observes that even super-technicians like Sir Georg Solti, in his thrilling 1960s Wagner records, permitted occasional wind intonation inadmissible now. One reason Western orchestras now find it so hard to sell concert tickets is the automatic assumption that their playing shall aspire to the condition of a multi-take CD. If the amazing thing about 78s' shortcomings is that any great records whatever came forth, the amazing thing about orchestras in 2006 is that they can still be motivated to give outstanding concerts at all, especially now that CD prices go ever downward while concert ticket prices for the biggest New York and London events continue to rise.

Millions, then, are deriving their entire musical experience from CDs while foregoing live events. Who wins from this bargain: Faust or Mephistopheles? Let no one attempt to settle that quarrel by turning Luddite. We who grew up in rural seclusion—this reviewer's native village resembled Yoknapatawpha County—feel deep gratitude that, thanks to hi-fi, we came to know the greatest Wagner and Verdi operas decades before our nearest cities staged any of them. Nonetheless, is it truly healthful that in 99 Anglophone households out of every 100, domestic singing and playing have completely given way to iPod autism? Philip cannot conclusively answer this question.

Philip fails to discuss any recordings by pianist Paul Wittgenstein—the philosopher's brother—but elsewhere this volume's treatment of chamber music, piano, and orchestral discs inspires awe. (Opera, choral music, and the organ are a bit slighted.) Philip displays astounding erudition in, and fair-minded reportage of, the self-contradictions so obvious in most composers' records of their own music.

Bartók performed his own piano pieces with great allure and freedom: unlike the thumping, tool-and-die-factory inexpressiveness that the very combination of "Bartók" and "pianism" in the same sentence presupposes. Elgar recorded his "Nimrod" at a pace so rapid

that any modern conductor trying it would be jeered off the rostrum. (Is Elgar's haste due—as Philip argues—to the piece's absence of funereal connotations in Elgar's own day? Or was Elgar simply over-aware of side-length limits?) Sometimes a composer simply forgets what he sought. Sometimes, as with Messiaen, he marries a performer who recasts what the score originally requested. Sometimes, like Stravinsky, he appears afflicted with historical amnesia, willfully flouting his own printed requirements as to notes, let alone tempi. What do composers want, in recordings that they either make or sanction, and what do they just put up with? Between the manuscript paper and the microphone falls the shadow.

Dipping a toe into recording history would make even the most blinkered Leo Strauss defender into a historicist. Take the subject of portamento, by which pre-Toscanini string players would slide quickly from note to note. No orchestra does—and most orchestras simply cannot do—anything of the kind now, which does not stop certain mischievous podium eccentrics like Roger Norrington from aiming at "historically informed performances." (Critical consensus accords Norrington the unsavory honor of having perpetrated the world's most musically and spiritually illiterate Beethoven symphony records, which perhaps achieve their apotheosis in an "Eroica" funeral march almost indistinguishable from "Mad Dogs and Englishmen.")

But if tape-era recording history in general is a case of "fake it till you make it," numerous period-instrument releases of 15 to 20 years ago managed new apogees or nadirs of sham. Writing today, when passions have cooled, musicologists can now admit the truth that in the 1980s and 1990s routinely destroyed the careers of those who uttered it: namely, that most early-music performers simply lacked the technical chops to survive outside their own ghetto.

Too much in Philip's coverage must be slighted in any review of less than monograph length. His fascinating discussions of early 20th century pianists' rhythmic

approaches, as captured on shellac (the modern assumption that melody line and bass line will automatically synchronize meant little or nothing to pianists before World War II); Paul Taffanel, a French flautist who remade woodwind playing in his own elegant image; Pablo Casals, revolutionizing cello technique by, in Philip's words, "fingering [that] involved the use of stretching to avoid many of the traditional shifts" ... so it goes. Of Philip's researches it can be boldly said: any music lover at any time can profit from studying them.

The above paragraphs have possibly focused overmuch on recordings' problems. Does a study of historical recordings lead to philosophical disgust with the whole recording method? Quite the opposite. Philip, a true believer, has a gift for igniting similar enthusiasm in others. From his concluding pages:

When we become disillusioned with modern recordings, all we have to do is put on the Busch Quartet playing late Beethoven, or Casals playing Bach, to hear the sound of musicians who, despite their masterly technical command, were uninterested in the smooth perfection of today, and were anxious only to make the music 'speak.' ... Often [with new recordings' eccentricities] the impression is that these things are being done for the sake of variety, or because the conductor is bored or wishes to attract attention. It is much rarer to feel that these novelties are there to serve the music. One's reaction is usually 'Goodness, can that be how it goes?' With the greatest music-making, however, the reaction is 'Of course, this is what the composer meant.'

To which one would add a variant of Orwell's adage about good novels: "Good recordings are made by people who are not frightened." Which means, by definition, people who are not spin-doctored. ■

*R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne, Australia.*



[*The Creators: From Chaucer and Dürer to Picasso and Disney*, Paul Johnson, HarperCollins, 320 pages]

## Absent at the Creation

By James Bowman

THEY SAY THAT *The Economist* is an excellent magazine for keeping informed about subjects you don't know anything about, but its deficiencies begin to appear as soon as it addresses one you do. The same could be said about *Creators* by the British polymath Paul Johnson, whose previous books, including *Modern Times* and *The Birth of the Modern*, have also tended to take on the kind of very large subjects of which one man could hardly be expected to have deep as well as extensive knowledge. But those books had a compelling narrative line and a brilliance that was at worst idiosyncratic. The arts seem to bring out the crank in him. *Creators*, a collection of sketches and mini-biographies like *Intellectuals*, to which it is the second in a projected trilogy to be concluded with *Heroes*, is an even odder book. It lumps together Picasso and Disney, Bach and Balenciaga, Shakespeare and Louis Comfort Tiffany, all of whom share only the name of "creators." Well, yes, but is that quite enough for them to have in common in order to make a subject for a book? I'm not persuaded, though I freely admit to having learned from the book a lot that I didn't know about a number of fascinating people.

But what about the things I did know? There aren't that many of them, alas, but where Mr. Johnson touches upon them I notice that he sometimes goes seriously astray. Here, for instance, is what he says about Geoffrey Chaucer's storytelling manner:

Chaucer, like all great tale-tellers, aims at deliberate speed; and as

with other brilliant comedians who came later—one thinks of Shakespeare himself, Swift, and Waugh—uses enviable economy of means in his funny bits, the couplet of short sharp words being perfect for his purpose. He never uses two words where one will do, and The Miller's Tale, a virtuoso exercise in brevity and keeping to the point, shows him at his best.

This is flat wrong, as anyone with more than a superficial knowledge of Chaucer could have told him. The Chaucerian style is just the opposite of this economical one, whether or not (and this is debatable too) Shakespeare, Swift, and Waugh use it. His comic effects are often achieved by using not just two words where one will do but 20. Since Paul Johnson brings up "The Miller's Tale," we might consider Absolon's shocked reaction to the discovery that he has unwittingly been kissing Alison's naked ers

Who rubbeth now, who froteth  
now his lippes

With dust, with sond, with straw,  
with clooth, with chippes  
where "rubbeth" and "froteth" mean the same thing and the comedy builds with each new abrasive. Or consider these lines from "Troilus and Criseyde," where old Calkas begs of the Greeks a hostage to exchange for his daughter, Criseyde, behind the walls of Troy:

The salte teris from his eyen tweye  
Ful faste ronnen down by either  
cheke.

That tears are salte, that they come from eyen, of which Calkas, like most people, has tweye—to match the two cheeks that his tears are running (where else?) down—amounts to such a redundancy of detail to say, simply, Calkas wept that we must conclude Chaucer to be either incompetent or, well, not much concerned with economy. His genius is for expansion, not concision, as is the case with most poets who originally wrote, as he did, for oral delivery.

This may seem a small point, but it is just one of the book's many annoy-

ances. As someone who has voluntarily read *Beowulf* more than once, I resent being told that "no one" ever reads it unless he is forced or is paid. Also *contra* Johnson, I believe that *Piers Ploughman* can be read for pleasure and that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—Johnson uncharacteristically leaves off Gawain's "Sir"—is not only "attractive" but one of the great monuments of English poetry. The quirkiness of Johnson's aesthetic judgments also appears in his devoting so much of the chapter on Jane Austen to spinsterhood as a spur to novel-writing or that on Johann Sebastian Bach to the mechanics of organ building. "How to turn wind power into art is the central problem of playing the organ and composing for the organ, and I suspect it is one that will never be finally solved," he writes. What on earth can this mean? What would a final solution to this "problem" look like? Isn't it "solved" every time an organist—or, for that matter, a flautist or an oboist—sits down and plays something beautiful and moving?

Tiffany must be included so that Johnson can show off his knowledge of the techniques involved in glass-making, which is as extensive—so far as I can tell anyway—as his knowledge of organ-building. In general, he is more interested in the processes and the marketing of art than he is in the art itself. This is fair enough, but even where that interest doesn't lead him into error, it often makes his observations appear beside the point.

Among his weird takes on familiar figures in intellectual history is his description of Victor Hugo as "the genius without a brain" and T.S. Eliot as "the last poet to wear spats." The latter might be an interesting observation if it were pursued a little further, but Johnson seems to regard the poet in spats as a mere curiosity. "Eliot," he writes, "conforms perfectly to my definition of an intellectual: 'a person who thinks ideas are more important than people.'" Whether or not this is a meaningful definition of an intellectual, it strikes me

as a libel on Eliot who, if not exactly a people person, gives evidence on almost every page of both love and hate for people and skepticism about ideas.

Some of this bizarrerie is owing to the veteran journalist's habit of trying to relate the past to the present, but too facilely. At one point, he compares Jane Austen's doing her novel-writing in corridors and hallways to Bill Clinton's doing, um, something else in the corridors and the hallways of the White House. "Hearing noises, the president was forced to zip up his trousers just as Jane Austen had to conceal the pages of her current novel. *Ceteris paribus*," he claims grandly, "and allowing for the standards of different epochs, Clinton's awkward interruptions were precisely the 'follies and nonsense' that would have made Austen laugh." This must be a contender for the most inappropriate use of *ceteris paribus*—not to mention "precisely"—ever. But if Jane Austen wouldn't have seen the joke, Mr. John-

son's own taste for follies and nonsense is occasionally on display. In particular, don't miss the story told to him by a very old man when he himself was a very young man about meeting at the age of four the aged Victor Hugo in yet another corridor, in his nightshirt and on the prowl—a story that can't be repeated in a family magazine.

Another problem is that the size and vagueness of his subject create a constant undertow in the direction of banality, and Paul Johnson isn't so strong a swimmer as he has been. Thus he writes, "in the end, creativity is what matters in art." Do tell! This, by the way, is a *propos* of Mark Twain, about whom he also writes that "in the written and spoken word, you can't beat the ability to create out of thin air." In fact, Johnson's passage on Twain's influence is a good summing up of the way he himself creates out of thin air when it comes to finding significance where others would not see it. "It is impossible to imagine," he writes with characteristic and hyperbolic dash, "the American musical without Twain's influence, often at second or third hand—or such institutions as Disney, *Time* magazine, *Reader's Digest*, or the *New Yorker*." And he goes on to add to this already imposing mass of intellectual progeny James Thurber, Dorothy Parker, the Marx Brothers, Raymond Chandler, both Roosevelts, John F. Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan: "If Twain was the stand-up comedian of literature, Reagan was the stand-up comedian of the cold war, finally bringing down the curtain on that long historical episode." On the plus side, I suppose, you have to say it takes real intellectual daring to credit Mark Twain (d. 1910) with a part in ending the Cold War.

Having read the chapter twice, I still can't quite figure out how and why Picasso and Disney are paired, unless it is because both were marketing geniuses and so in different ways illustrate Paul Johnson's most basic interest in creativity. "Whereas Picasso tended to dehumanize the women he drew or painted, Disney anthropomorphized his

animal subjects; that was the essential source of his power and humor." Well, maybe so, but it is a contrast that leads us nowhere. And taking Disney seriously as an artist raises all kinds of problems that Johnson doesn't see. Of Disney's "Steamboat Willie," he says: "The possibilities opened up were limitless, a new kind of anthropomorphized animal art that would have fascinated Dürer." Oh no, it wouldn't! "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" "was a huge critical and commercial success and marked the point at which animation achieved maturity as an art form." Oh no, it didn't! "Disney's instinct was always to get back to nature (whereas Picasso's was to get away from it.)" Oh no, it wasn't! "The essence of Disney's art was to reinforce, transform, and reanimate nature, to surrealize it. Hence in deciding which was more extensive and permanent we are pronouncing a verdict on the power or weakness, of nature." Oh no, we aren't!

All these statements strike me—and probably most people who have already-formed views of his various and miscellaneous subjects—as utter nonsense. But at the same time I'd have to say that it is always worthwhile to consider such a contrarian view of the world and especially anything so hard to pin down as the creative world. Indeed, calling it contrarian is an understatement. It is weird, bizarre, outlandish, unheard of and, of course, utterly original.

In this if in no other way, Paul Johnson is rather like Picasso, towards whom he makes such an unnecessary point of displaying his detestation. For, like Picasso, he forces us to see familiar things in entirely new ways. No one else would dare to say what he says—with good reason, I would add. But what do I know? Only that there is also a kind of exhilaration in reading over so much wrongheadedness, so perhaps it is a good thing, once in a while, that someone should try saying it. ■

*James Bowman is the author, most recently, of Honor: A History.*

## MOVING?

### Changing your address?

Simply go to **The American Conservative** website, [www.amconmag.com](http://www.amconmag.com)

Click "subscribe" and then click "address change."

To access your account make sure you have your *TAC* mailing label. You may also subscribe or renew online.

If you prefer to mail your address change send your *TAC* label with your new address to:

**The American Conservative**  
Subscription Department  
P.O. Box 9030  
Maple Shade, NJ 08052-9030

# National(ist) Pastime



“Do sports really matter?” asks Richard Reeves in his syndicated column. He then goes on to make fun of us Europeans for taking sports much too

seriously in general and football’s World Cup in particular. Coming from an American, this I find a bit rich, because no matter how one cuts it, there are only two sports-mad nations on this planet. America is one of them, the other is Australia.

No, what Reeves should have written was that come World Cup time, we sophisticated Europeans go bananas and leave such unpleasant topics as Iraq and American failures in foreign policy to the bores and snake-oil salesmen who got Uncle Sam involved in the first place. This last point is quite important. During normal times one looks for Iraq news and the latest rumors coming out of Washington. But the average person has as much influence over policy and what transpires in the nation’s capital as I have in Hollywood.

Politicians, especially in Europe, have disdain for the common man. They are not truly democratic in their beliefs. They know that if there were a free vote on many matters, Europeans would vote for all sorts of unenlightened measures: the restoration of the death penalty, for example, and in a lesser way the withdrawal from the European Union.

In other words, the governing class tells the people what is good for them, and in turn the governed are permitted to think that their votes count. They do not and never have except when blood is spilled.

But come World Cup time, everyone has a say. Let me quote from the *Kenya Times*: “Africa’s last hope was extinguished with Ghana’s 3-0 defeat at the hands of Brazil. The emphatic victory teaches Africa a cruel lesson. The continent’s teams are yet to catch up with

their European and South American counterparts.” Bravo *Kenya Times*, say I. When was the last time an African newspaper or politician did not blame an African defeat in sports, or in any other matter, on imperialism and the big bad West?

There is something very great about football. Everyone except North Americans plays it and loves it. The real reason they do is not patriotism but nationalism, the latter considered a dirty word by the kleptocrats who rule us from Brussels.

Tribalism comes alive at World Cup time. The politicians don’t like it, so they blow smoke by calling it an extension of politics by other means. Yes, football between nations is the closest thing to

have never managed to straighten out the culture of violence and deception at the core of the game nearly as well as the four major leagues in North America have done.” (Players dive pretending to be fouled in order to gain advantage.) As always, the *Times* is not only wrong, it is ridiculous. The reason soccer has not caught on in North America is that bad players play it, and the game’s much too tame. Someone should send George Vecsey to a European school to learn what soccer is all about.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Americans don’t like to kick a ball but like to throw it through a hoop, run with it, or hit it with a piece of wood. We Europeans like to kick it and while we’re at it, kick a little bit of our opponents. And another thing. When nations play against each other, they become the real thing. An entire people unite, as the Germans did here this month. An entire people in the extraordinary throes of

**AN ENTIRE PEOPLE BEING LIBERATED FROM THEIR PAST BY A FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT CAME TOGETHER TO ELEVATE A MATCH INTO A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.**

war, which was the original extension of politics by other means. I watched Germany defeat Argentina in overtime and saw the Argies do exactly what they did in the Falklands back in 1982. They scored first, just as they did back in ’82 when they occupied the islands, then proceeded to dig in and play defense. Eventually the Germans scored and won the match, just as the Brits won back the Falklands when the Argentine army dug in and was picked off by gunners with night-vision weapons. Then and now, riots followed defeat.

Mind you, I forgot to mention the remarks of the stuffy and rather silly *New York Times*. “The masters of soccer

being liberated from their past by a football tournament came together to elevate a match into a spiritual experience. The roar that went up when the German team came out to face Italy was taken up in every city, town, village, and hamlet across the country.

A European country will win the cup, which gives me great pleasure. Germany hosting the cup was the political symbol not only of German reunification but the collapse of Communism. This was the popular expression of one-nation unity. Bravo, Europe!

Reeves and Vecsey, stick to softball with the girls on Sunday morning and leave the diving and the violence to us. ■



# A Humane Society Starts with You



Join us,  
and make  
a difference.

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES.**

2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037  
202-452-1100 • [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)